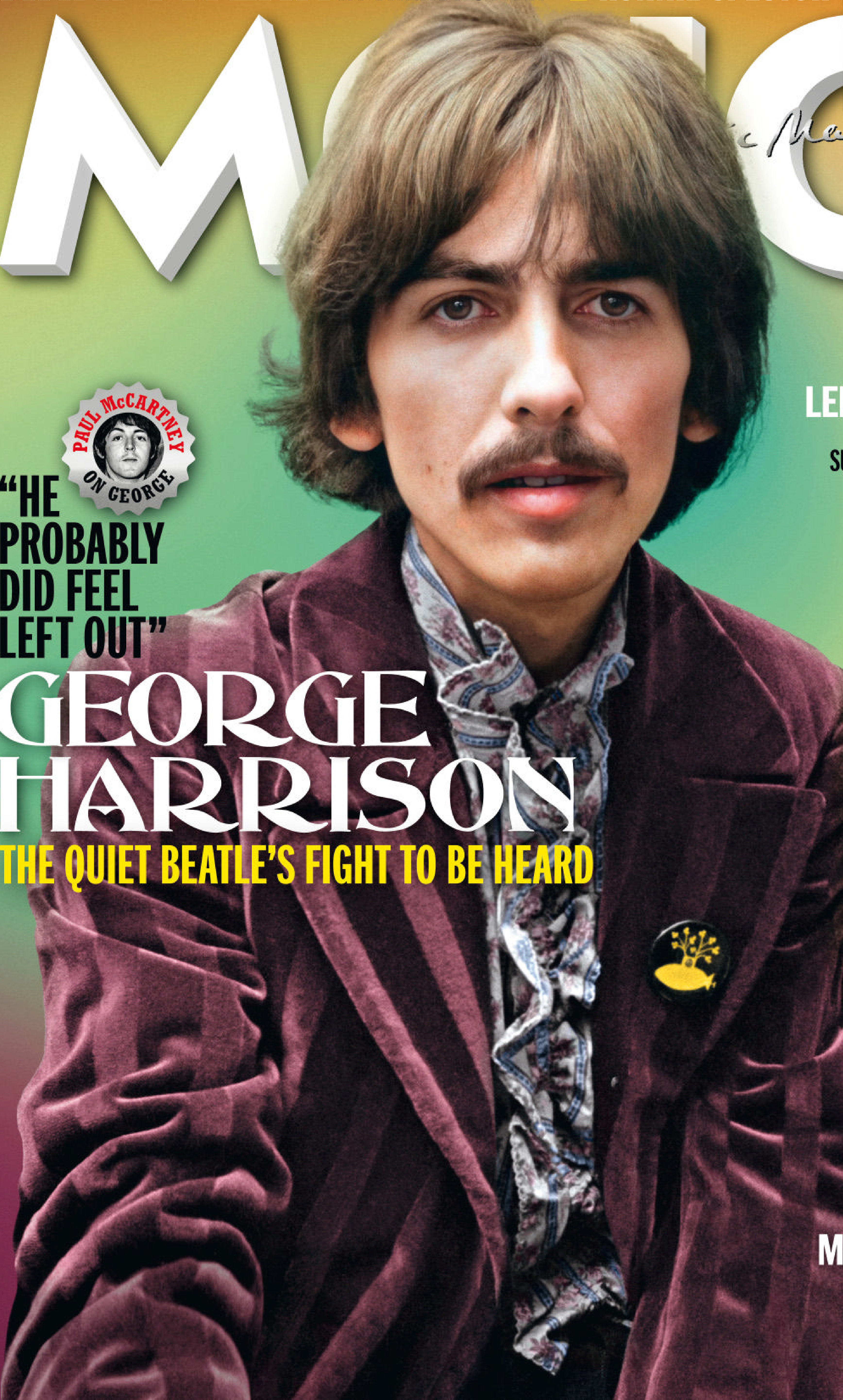
KRAFTWERK “THEY HAD ME IN THEIR POWER”

FAREWELL RONNIE SPECTOR

MOJO

c Magazine



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PAUL McCARTNEY ON GEORGE

“HE PROBABLY DID FEEL LEFT OUT”

GEORGE HARRISON

THE QUIET BEATLE’S FIGHT TO BE HEARD

LEMONHEADS
HOW EVAN DANDO SURVIVED *EVERYTHING*

YARD ACT
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TEARS FOR FEARS
RULE THE WORLD!

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MOTOWN
THEIR BRITISH INVASION!

MEAT LOAF
R.I.P.

+ WHATEVER HAPPENED TO **NEUTRAL MILK HOTEL?**

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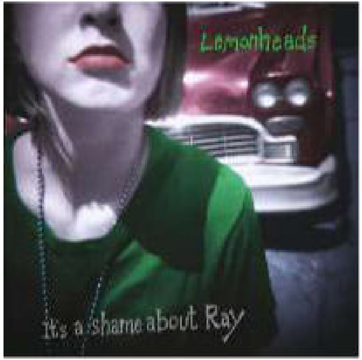

THE LEMONHEADS
IT'S A SHAME ABOUT RAY
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Lemonheads' seminal album, lovingly reissued on ltd ed deluxe bookback double LP & CD. Featuring essential & unreleased extras: b-sides, demos, covers & KCRW 1992 session track with unseen photos & new liner notes.

MODERN STUDIES
WE ARE THERE
FIRE RECORDS LP / CD

Flying high above their psych-folk roots, it's an epic journey that's exquisitely delivered, transcending categories, nodding to Brubeck, Low, Talk Talk, Jim O'Rourke & Pentangle, making music that crosses over in these modern times. **** Mojo **** Uncut

PICTISH TRAIL
ISLAND FAMILY
FIRE RECORDS LP / CD

The psych-pop wonder delivers a strange, unpredictable & sardonic record. Inspired by all from Fever Ray to The Flaming Lips, Liars, Mercury Rev & Beck. "A real hero of the Scottish underground scene" Huw Stephens, BBC 6 Music.

BOGDAN RACZYNSKI
ADDLE
PLANET MU 2LP

Bogdan Raczynski's first album of new music in 15 years. Marking a change from the high-octane jungle tekno braindance for which he is most commonly known, here we find the Polish American musician in a more melodic & zen-like place of peace.

SUPERCHUNK
WILD LONELINESS
MERGE RECORDS LP / CD

New album featuring special guests Sharon Van Etten, Teenage Fanclub, Mike Mills, Tracyanne Campbell & more!

ERIC CHENAUX
SAY LAURA
CONSTELLATION 180g LP / CD

The acclaimed avant-balladeer returns with his most immaculate & impeccably recorded album, pure tenor croon gliding through crisp reverberant ether, frazzled semi-improv guitar careening dizzily. "A musician like no other." (TinyMixTapes)

KEE AVIL
CREASE
CONSTELLATION 180g LP / CD

Dark deconstructed electroacoustic postpunk using chiselled minimalist guitar, twitchy sinuous electronics & finely wrought lyricism/vocals. The lovechild of Scott Walker & PJ Harvey, or Grouper produced by Matmos. A stunning debut.

SHADOW UNIVERSE
SUBTLE REALMS, SUBTLE WORLDS
MONOTREME LP / CD

Slovenian instrumental duo create breathtaking cinematic soundscapes incorporating post-rock, neoclassical, ambient & post-metal elements, with cascading piano, soaring strings/synths & towering guitars. RIYL Mogwai, God is an Astronaut, Caspian.

LIA ICES
FAMILY ALBUM
NATURAL RECORDS LP / CD

A stunning collection of psychedelic-tinged Americana. Written on Moon Mountain in Sonoma, California on the precipice of motherhood. "Throughout Family Album, Ices is inspired, renewed, and at peace with the natural world.

VARIOUS ARTISTS
UNDER THE BRIDGE
SKEP WAX RECORDS LP / CD

A compilation of brilliant new songs - and an amazing reunion. All fourteen tracks are by bands and songwriters who were on Sarah Records. Still pure, still radical, still in love.

NOON GARDEN
BEULAH SPA
THE LIQUID LABEL LP / CD

The debut album from Charles Prest (Flamingods). An exotic psych-pop odyssey featuring the singles Desiree, Villa & Decca Divine. "I absolutely love this...brilliant experimental psychedelia." Lauren Laverne.

PARTNER LOOK
BY THE BOOK
TROUBLE IN MIND RECORDS LP / CD

Debut from this Melbourne quartet of friends (and yes, partners) is a twelve-track indie charmer of scrappy, sophisticated ruminations on self, home, life unfolding, and surrealism of the smaller things.

STAR PARTY
MEADOW FLOWER
TOUGH LOVE LP

Star Party's debut album seamlessly meshes together noise, melody & harmony. Soft & clearly American vocals float over waves of feedback & drum machine racket like a delicate mist sitting just above a mountain lake.

DUQUETTE JOHNSTON
THE SOCIAL ANIMALS
SINGLE LOCK RECORDS LP / CD

On his album, "The Social Animals", Duquette Johnston partnered with producer John Agnello and an all-star cast of players including Sonic Youth's Steve Shelley to create his boldest and most powerful music to date.

KENDRA MORRIS
NINE LIVES
KARMA CHIEF RECORDS LP / CD

10 years since her first LP, Kendra Morris' Nine Lives encapsulates moments from what could be nine lifetimes, conjuring imagery evocative of road trips to weird and wonderful places.

HOLODRUM
HOLODRUM
GRINGO RECORDS LP

Debut album of interlocking grooves and hot-headed repeato-rock-via-CBGBs dopamine hits from new disco-infused synth-pop group, featuring members of Hookworms, Virginia Wing, Cowtown and Yard Act.

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APRIL 2022

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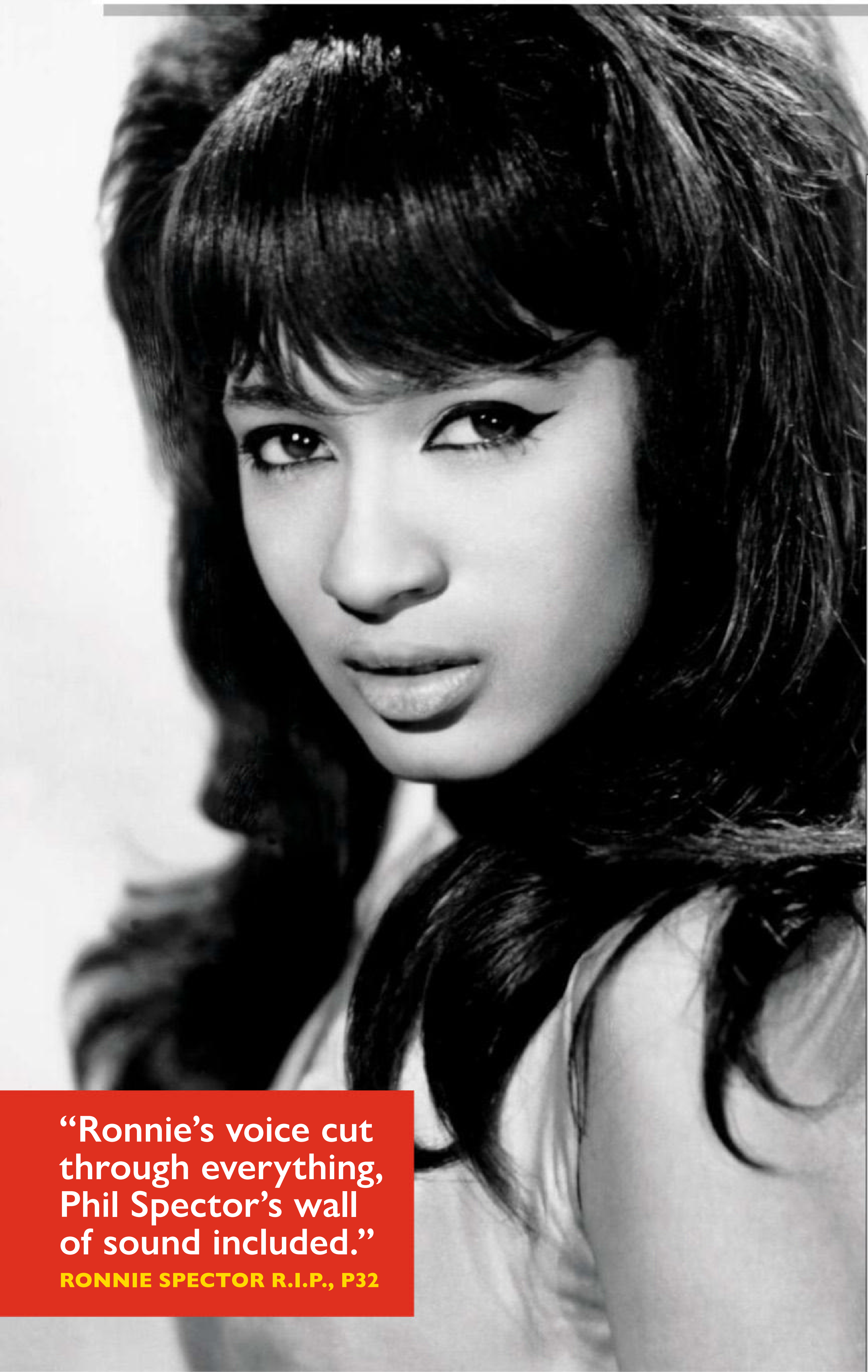


“Ronnie’s voice cut through everything, Phil Spector’s wall of sound included.”

RONNIE SPECTOR R.I.P., P32

FEATURES

26 EVAN DANDO The Lemonheads’ dashing tunesmith reveals how life seems to keep evading his control: “I just recently got off heroin again. Man, that was a bad one.”

32 RONNIE SPECTOR A singer like no other. A story to make your hair curl. Tribute is paid to The Ronettes’ sadly departed siren by Brian Wilson, Steven Van Zandt and more.

38 YARD ACT How DIY beats and worm’s-eye street poetry lifted Leeds indie hopefuls out of a rut and into the Next Big Thing bracket: “We’re thinking ‘Beastie Boys’.”

42 KAREN DALTON Nearly 30 years after her death, Karen Dalton’s unique and magical music is finally being recognised. Friends and peers remember “a person who said, ‘Take it or leave it.’”

48 TEARS FOR FEARS Synths’n’psychiatry to world domination: how *Songs From The Big Chair* cracked America and did their heads in. “We felt this incredible, intoxicating *whoosh*.”

52 NEUTRAL MILK HOTEL Chaotic shows, singing saws, beautiful records, fervid fan love… Inside the ’90s’ most mysterious band, and their singer’s inexplicable retirement.

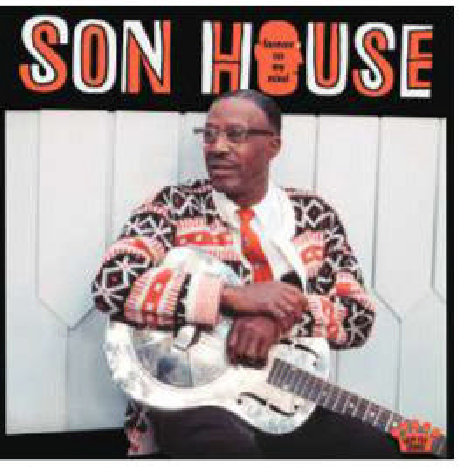
58 LA PUNK The Damned, The Cramps and more: killer shots of the LA punk scene, 1977-1980, from a new book by Slash magazine house photographer, Melanie Nissen.

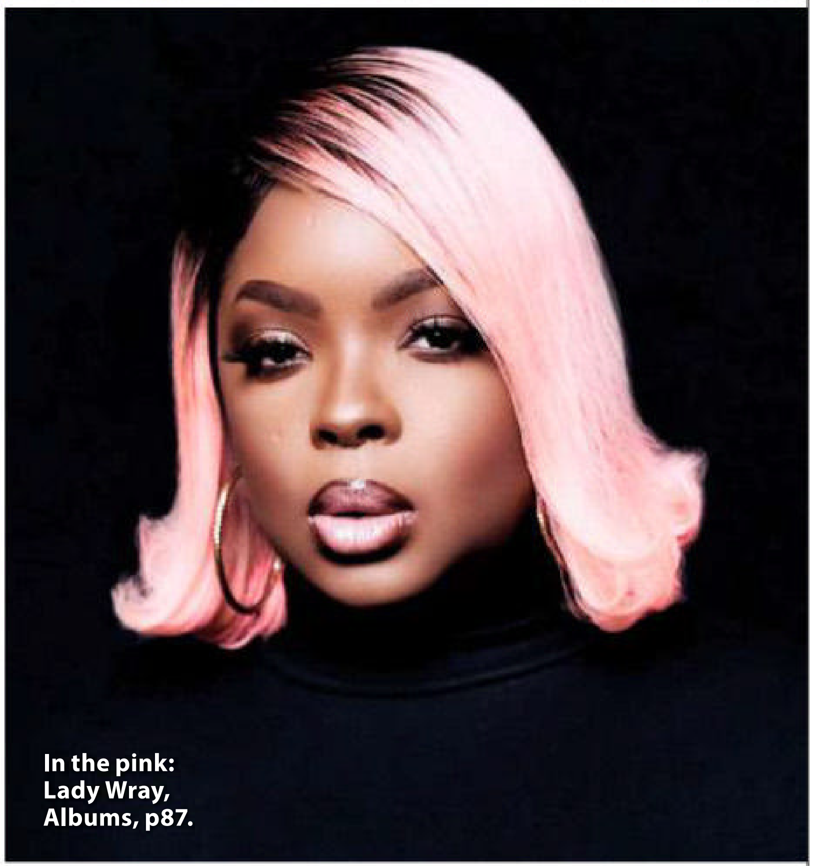
COVER STORY

64 GEORGE HARRISON Get Back reminded us of his frustrations, and also his genius. Cue: his creative journey, his 30 Greatest Songs, and a never-printed Paul McCartney interview about his quiet friend: “He was a very loyal guy.”

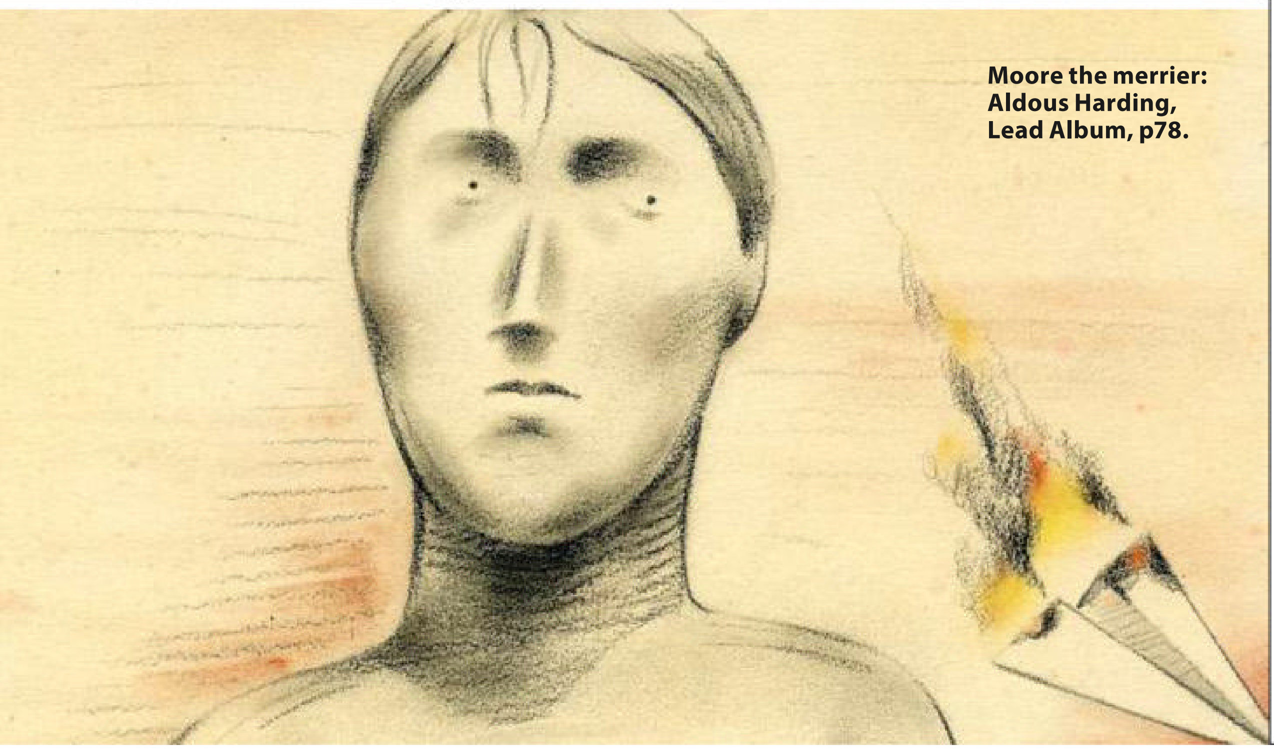
Getty

Mighty like a rose: Rokia Koné teams up with Jacknife Lee, p24.





In the pink: Lady Wray, Albums, p87.



Moore the merrier: Aldous Harding, Lead Album, p78.

MOJO

REGULARS

9 ALL BACK TO MY PLACE Cate Le Bon, Steve Hackett and Ryley Walker bring the soundtrack to all their minds.

106 REAL GONE R. Dean Taylor, Don Wilson, Elza Soares, Burke Shelley, Michael Lang and many others, goodnight and farewell.

112 ASK MOJO Who crossed rock's credibility fence?

114 HELLO GOODBYE First he was blown away by the alien sounds, but then the cold robotics became too much. Wolfgang Flür remembers the glory of Kraftwerk.

WHAT GOES ON!

12 MEAT LOAF The larger-than-life rock'n'roller born Marvin Lee Aday is gone. MOJO remembers the man, his music and the contradictions that drove him.

14 BELLE AND SEBASTIAN We call the B&S HQ hotline to talk about their new LP, who their "least Smithsy" members are, and what Adele's got to do with it.

16 JOHNNY AND EDGAR WINTER Johnny left us in 2014, but now his brother Edgar is joined by some very heavy friends for a musical tribute taking in every aspect of their shared musical life.

18 KEN BOOTHE Reggae's Everything I Own hitmaker is back! Read his Confidential thoughts on the made men of Jamaican music and why you need to get off that phone.

20 JOHN OTWAY He's the off-the-leash rocker who's taken 'if at first you don't succeed' and 'ridicule is nothing to be scared of' to heroic lengths. On the verge of his 5,000th gig, he reflects on a life spent being Really Free.

MOJO FILTER

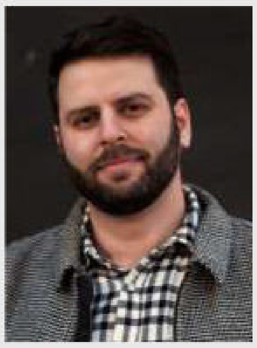
78 NEW ALBUMS Aldous Harding adopts myriad personae, plus Johnny Marr, King Hannah, Park Jiha and Destroyer.

92 REISSUES Lost Son House found, plus Ornette Coleman and Lemonheads.

102 BOOKS Beautiful Bill Frisell biog, plus Heavy Metal, Fat White Family and Frank Zappa.

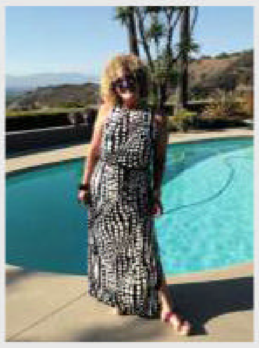
104 SCREEN Are you sitting comfortably? Good, here's seven hours of Blu-Ray Beatles.

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS INCLUDE...



Adam Clair

Adam is the author of Endless Endless: A Lo-Fi History Of The Elephant 6 Mystery, from which he adapts the strange story of the band Neutral Milk Hotel on page 52. He writes about music and technology for a number of publications, most of which still exist, and lives in Philadelphia with his cat.



Melanie Nissen

Between 1977 and 1980, Melanie was photographer for Los Angeles' ground-breaking music magazine Slash, before taking her creative skills to the record labels, art directing sleeves for Lenny Kravitz, Janet Jackson, Iggy Pop, PiL and many more. A portfolio of her shots from LA's nascent punk scene begins on page 58.

John Bungey

John has written for MOJO since 1994 in between his regular gig at The Times. This month he talks to 75-year-old Edgar Winter about the legacy of his brother, pioneering guitar hero Johnny. Music-writing has taken John to Mali with Salif Keita, New Orleans with Dr. John, and Bermondsey with Amy Winehouse.

Natalie Piserchio, Kenny MacPherson, Vince Pastiche

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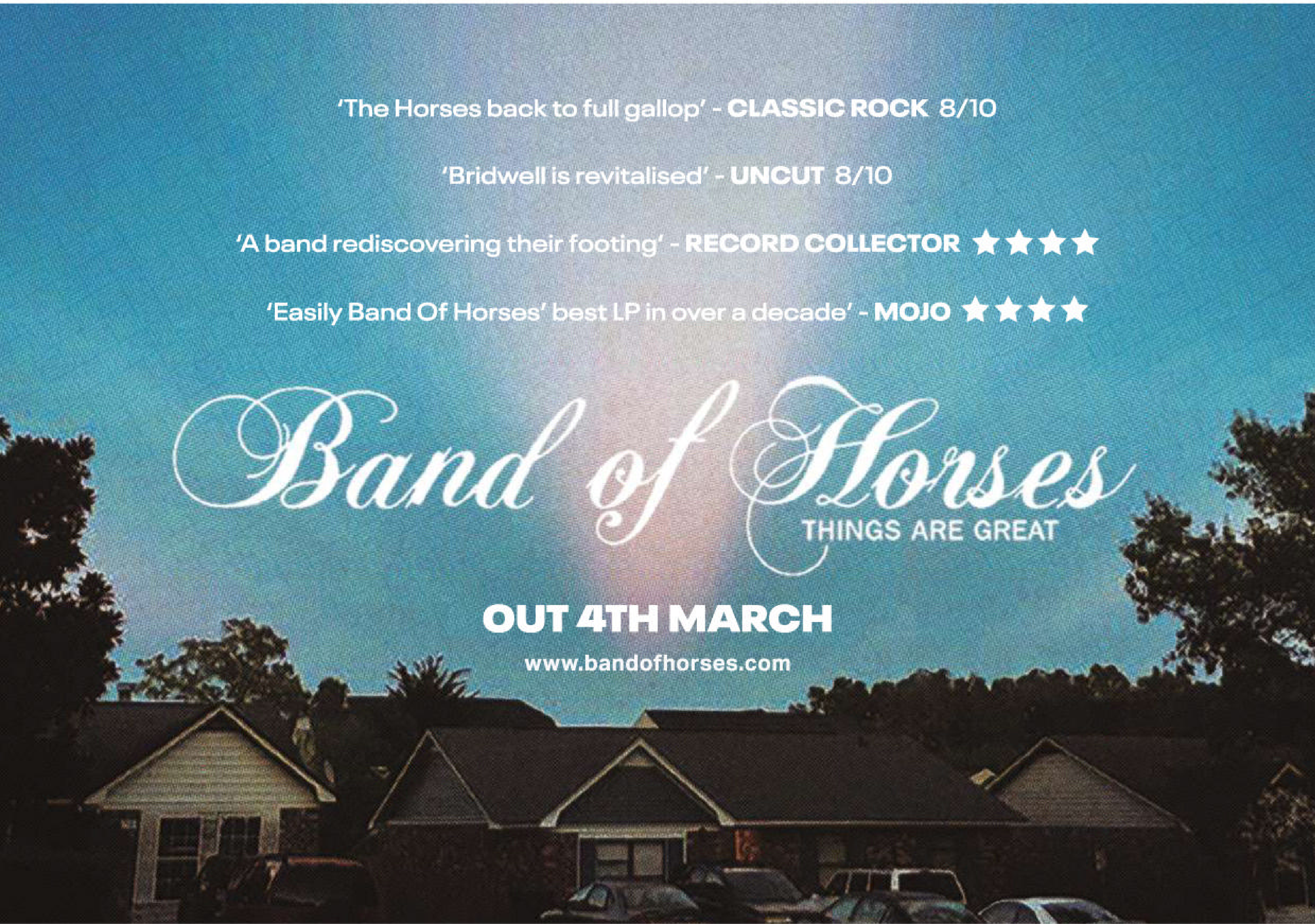

'The Horses back to full gallop' - **CLASSIC ROCK** 8/10

'Bridwell is revitalised' - **UNCUT** 8/10

'A band rediscovering their footing' - **RECORD COLLECTOR** ★★★★

'Easily Band Of Horses' best LP in over a decade' - **MOJO** ★★★★

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MOJO PRESENTS

HANDLE WITH CARE

NEW MUSIC 2022

1 WORKING MEN'S CLUB

WIDOW

Syd Minsky-Sargeant and co emerged in 2020, melding vituperative songcraft with pulsating dancefloor electronica in a way few have managed since the heyday of New Order. Widow is a sneak preview of the new Working Men's Club music coming in 2022.

Written by Sydney Minsky-Sargeant. Published by Just Isn't Music. Produced and mixed by Ross Orton at McCall Sound, Sheffield. Engineered by Ross Orton. ℗&©2022 Heavenly Recordings under exclusive license to [PIAS].

2 ROKIA KONÉ & JACKNIFE LEE

KURUNBA

From Mali, Rokia Koné has graduated out of the Amazones d'Afrique pan-African supergroup to a striking solo career, with digital assistance from producer Jacknife Lee (R.E.M., U2). Koné is interviewed on page 24.

Written by Rokia Koné / Garrett 'Jacknife' Lee. Published by 3D Family Publishing & France Media Monde – RFI Talent / Besme administered by Kobalt Music Publishing Ltd. ℗&©2022 Real World Records Ltd. From *Bamanan* (Real World Records).

3 ERIN RAE

MODERN WOMAN

As she explained in MOJO 340, Erin Rae's politically engaged and socially progressive mindset never overburdens her peppy take on Americana. "It's important to bring lightness to the stage," she says – hence this easy-going skewering of old ideas of femininity. From her third album, *Lighten Up*.

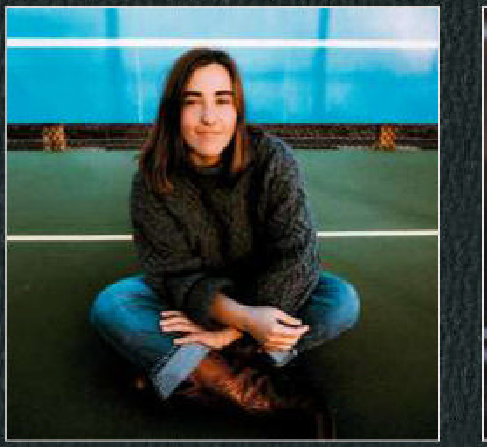
Written by Erin McKaskle. Published by Good Memory (SESAC) administered by Confidently Canadian Publishing. ℗&©2022 Good Memory. Marketed & distributed by Thirty Tigers/ The Orchard. From *Lighten Up* (Good Memory (marketed & distributed by Thirty Tigers)).

4 BILLY STRINGS

HEARTBEAT OF AMERICA

Another country outlier, Billy 'Strings' Apostol is a fleet-fingered guitar virtuoso who can juggle affiliations with rappers and the Grateful Dead while honouring bluegrass tradition. "I'm not a miner's son," he told MOJO 339. "I'll sing about meth, not mining."

Sony Tree Publishing / Songs of Tuckaway Music / Apostol Publishing (BMI) Aaron Allen: JOY ZONE (ASCAP)/Use Your Words Music (BMI) ℗&©2021 Billy Strings LLC Under Exclusive License to Rounder Records. From *Renewal*; www.billystrings.com



9 MARGO CILKER

FLOOD PLAIN

A wandering troubadour from eastern Oregon, Margo Cilker's debut album, *Pohorylle*, finds her traversing the Basque country as well as the States, recording her journeys – and those of others – with a tone and craft that sits impressively at the midpoint between Gillian Welch and Lucinda Williams. "Don't you forget, you always come home…"

Written by Margo Cilker. Published by Copyright Control. ℗&©2021 Loose Music under exclusive license from Margo Cilker. From *Pohorylle* (Loose/Fluff & Gravy); www.loosemusic.com

10 ANAÏS MITCHELL

BRIGHT STAR

Anaïs Mitchell has taken some notable detours since her last solo album in 2012: a folk covers set as one-third of Bonny Light Horseman; the small matter of a Tony-winning Broadway musical, Hadestown. Now, though, the Vermont singer-songwriter has re-engaged with her most intimate, personal instincts: "I can't wait until I am 60 and don't have any fucks left."

Written by Mitchell. Published by Treleven Music (ASCAP) adm. Candid Music Publishing. ℗&©Anaïs Mitchell under exclusive license to BMG Rights Management (US) LLC. From *Anaïs Mitchell.*

11 CAROLINE

IWR

London collective caroline, with a small 'c', make a subtle noise for a big, eight-piece band: crafted post-rock hymnals, reminiscent of classically-attuned '90s bands like Rachel's, where fragile strings and unsteady chorales accrue power by stealth. Rousing, on the quiet.

Written by Casper Hughes, Mike O' Malley, Jasper Llewellyn, Oliver Hamilton, Magdalena McLean, Freddy Wordsworth, Hugh Aynsley, Alex McKenzie. ℗2021 Rough Trade Records Limited. Published by Copyright Control ISRC No GB-CVZ-21-00186. From *caroline* [RT0150] Licensed courtesy of Rough Trade Records Limited by arrangement with Beggars Group Media Limited; www.roughtraderecords.com

12 ALABASTER DEPLUME

MRS CALAMARI

"The reason to make *Gold* is to give people courage and love," Alabaster DePlume tells us on page 22, and this highlight illustrates the eccentric multi-tasker's practice of musical loving kindness. His instrumental rather than lyrical side takes precedence on Mrs Calamari, his airy sax-playing like an ambient response to vintage Ethiopian jazz.

Written by Angus Fairbairn. Published by Domino Publishing Co. ℗&©2021 International Anthem Recording Co. From *GOLD* (Lost Map / International Anthem); www.lostmap.com / www.intlanthem.com

Vishesh Sharma, Karen Paulina Biswell, Chris Almeida, Ian Laidlaw, Tom Whitson, Phoebe Fox, Joshua Black Wilkins, Desdemona Burgin, Matt Correia

IT'S BEEN QUITE A WHILE SINCE WE PUT TOGETHER A GRAB-bag CD of eclectic new music to accompany our magazine – 30 issues, in fact, since the *MOJO Rising* compilation of October 2019. That disc introduced Fontaines D.C., Yola, Black Midi, Mdou Moctar, Weyes Blood, Amyl And The Sniffers and many others who have since become critical players in the MOJO universe.

Two-and-a-half years on, the time seems right to do it again. We're proud, then, to unveil *Handle With Care* and our MOJO Class Of 2022 – the rabble-rousers, storytellers, classical artisans and radical innovators destined to soundtrack this eventful year. Here you'll find heartland folk and electro epiphany; searing post-punk and transcendental jazz; a song from the Sahara, sung in Welsh; and a prevailing spirit, exemplified by Los Bitchos, of pan-global "zing-zang". An index of forward-thinking possibilities, and of the creative diversity of the new music-makers we try and represent in each issue of MOJO. The best thing that you've ever found? Handle it with care…

MOJO PRESENTS
HANDLE WITH CARE
NEW MUSIC 2022
YARD ACT, CURTIS HARDING, ANAÏS MITCHELL, AROOJ AFTAB & MORE

5 YARD ACT
DARK DAYS

A punchy, crowd-pleasing hybrid of The Fall, Arctic Monkeys and Sleaford Mods, Leeds quartet Yard Act have spent the pandemic perfecting their 21st century brand of post-punk. As they reveal on page 38, however, there's more to them than righteous indignation; a nuance to singer James Smith beyond the "snarky finger-pointer".

Written by Smith / Shipstone/ Needham / Townend. Published by Copyright Control / Domino Music Publishing. ℗&©2021 details Zen F.C. From *Dark Days EP*; www.yardactors.com

6 CURTIS HARDING
I WON'T LET YOU DOWN

"Soul is a concept," said Atlanta's Harding in MOJO 339. "You don't have to be a musician. It's about the life experiences you have." Nevertheless, this third LP showcases a musician with old-school soul chops, and an understanding of how both the political and musical vibes of the early '70s are worth revisiting in 2022.

Written by Curtis Harding. Published by Curtis Harding (Figure 8 Publishing (BMI)) ℗&©2021 Curtis Harding, under exclusive license to Anti. From *If Words Were Flowers* (Anti).

7 IMARHAN
ADAR NEWLAN (FEAT. GRUFF RHYS)

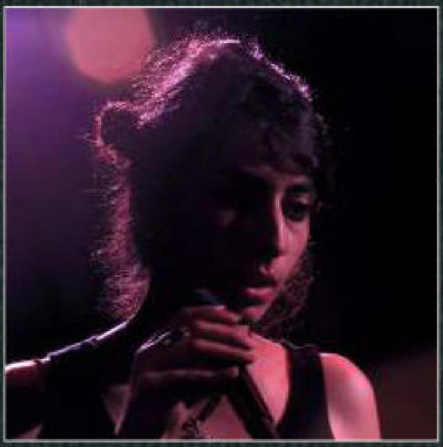
Western musicians have guested discreetly on recent LPs by Saharan rock dons Tinariwen, but here their junior brothers Imarhan duet with Gruff Rhys for a Tuareg/Welsh-language hybrid that's as harmonious and effective as it is unlikely.

Written by Iyad Moussa Ben Abderahmane, Abdelkader Ourzig, Tahar Khaldi, Hicham Bouhasse, Haiballah Akhamouk, Gruff Rhys. Published by Inear publishing. Administered by Warp Publishing. ℗&©City Slang 2021. From *Aboogi* (City Slang); imarhan.com

8 LOS BITCHOS
PISTA (FRESH START)

More rampant hybrids, courtesy of the London-based Los Bitchos – an Australian/Swedish/Uruguayan/UK quartet who mix further Turkish and Peruvian influences into their "zing-zang" twang. It all coheres brilliantly, and in unexpected ways: Pista sounds roughly like the Modern Lovers' Egyptian Reggae re-imagined by Khruangbin.

Written by Serra Petale, Alex Kapranos. Published by Copyright Control. ℗&©City Slang 2021. From *Let The Festivities Begin!* (City Slang); losbitchos.com



13 AROOJ AFTAB
AEY NA BALAM

Not strictly a new track – Aey Na Balam actually comes from Arooj Aftab's debut, *Bird Under Water* – but one definitely worth discovering, given the Brooklyn-based Pakistani's upward trajectory: she was a welcome surprise nominee in this year's Grammy Awards. A gorgeous mix of traditional Pakistani music, folk, jazz and electronica, topped with a voice akin to Elizabeth Fraser.

Written by Arooj Aftab and Bhrigu Sahni (Arooj Aftab, Jörn Bielfeldt, Mario Carillo, Bhrigu Sahni, Magda Giannikou, Rakae Jamil) From *Bird Under Water*. ℗&©Arooj Aftab 2014.

14 GRACE CUMMINGS
STORM QUEEN

The latest nascent star to emerge out of the Australian indie scene, Grace Cummings is an actor and associate of the King Gizzard crowd. Her music, though, is strikingly different: unstinting noir blues, like a jazz-adjacent Bad Seeds, delivered in a voice with similar lived-in gravitas to that of the mature Marianne Faithfull. Listen out for a wild sax solo, too.

Written by Grace Cummings. Self-published. ℗&©2021 ATO Records. From *Storm Queen*; https://m.facebook.com/gracecummingsmusic/

15 BINKER AND MOSES
ACCELEROMETER OVERDOSE

And talking of wild saxophones, Binker Golding may be the London jazz revival's secret superstar: less lauded than Shabaka Hutchings and Nubya Garcia, but no less fierce and fluid in his playing. Here he reunites with drum maestro Moses Boyd for an incantatory new workout, with new third wheel Max Luthert on synths and loops.

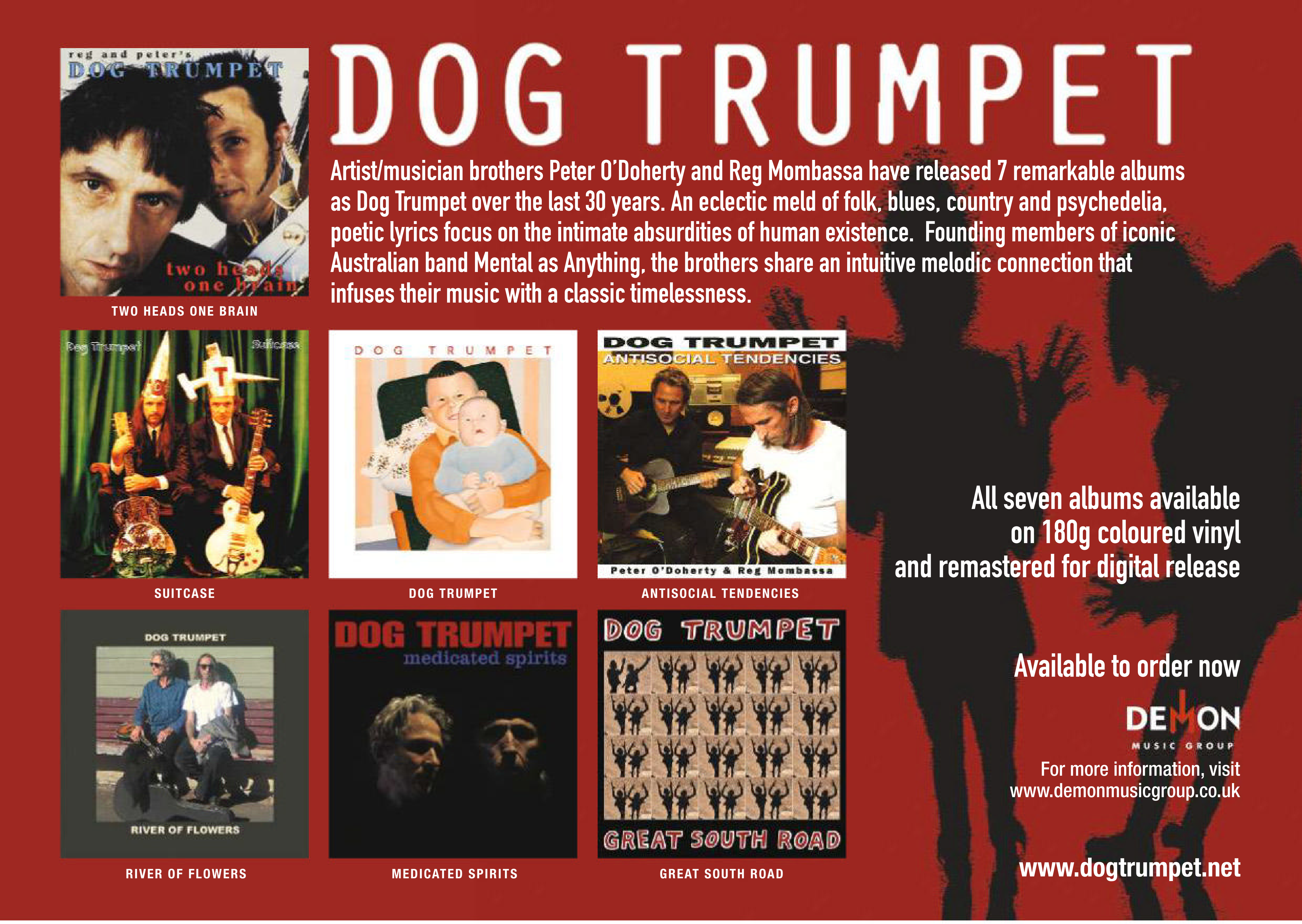
Written by Binker Golding, Moses Boyd, Max Luthert. Published by Gearbox Records 2021. From *Feeding The Machine* (Gearbox Records); www.binkerandmoses.com

"I'm an optimist. I'm trying to find enlightenment."

YARD ACT

– the truth about 2022's angry young men.

INTERVIEW STARTS PAGE 38



DOG TRUMPET

Artist/musician brothers Peter O'Doherty and Reg Mombassa have released 7 remarkable albums as Dog Trumpet over the last 30 years. An eclectic meld of folk, blues, country and psychedelia, poetic lyrics focus on the intimate absurdities of human existence. Founding members of iconic Australian band Mental as Anything, the brothers share an intuitive melodic connection that infuses their music with a classic timelessness.

TWO HEADS ONE BRAIN

SUITCASE

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Cate Le Bon

COME ON THEN, CARMARTHEN

What music are you currently grooving to?

Music For Saxofone & Bass Guitar – **Sam Gendel** and **Sam Wilkes**. Also **Charlotte Adigéry**, **Standing On The Corner**, and I'm currently having my first love affair with **Tears For Fears**.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

Faust IV by a country mile. I can remember exactly where I was and how I felt when I first heard it. Those feelings have only blossomed over the years and it's a record I will always reference, whether it's a feel or a specific sound I'm chasing. The real take away for me is that the abandonment employed is inspired rather than calculated. It's a visceral exploration of sound and songwriting.

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

I saved up to buy **New Kids On The Block**, *Step By Step*. My dad convinced me to buy it on vinyl so he could rip a tape from it for the car, except he would never let me play it. We drove to Woolworths in Carmarthen – it came with a very inappropriate poster for a nine-year-old.

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

I'd love to know how it feels to sing Cloudbusting as if it were my own.

What do you sing in the shower?

A **Crowded House** medley, with all my heart.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

[Zeus B. Held project] **Gina X Performance**, *Nice Mover*.

And your Sunday morning record?

'Blue' Gene Tyranny, *Out Of The Blue*, followed immediately by *Trust In Rock*. I could listen to these for the rest of eternity and never tire of them.

Pompeii is out now on Mexican Summer. Cate tours the UK in March and Europe in April.

ALL BACK TO MY PLACE

THE STARS REVEAL THE SONIC DELIGHTS GUARANTEED TO GET THEM GOING...

Steve Hackett

GUITAR MAGUS, GENESIS ALUMNUS

What music are you currently grooving to?

Dare's *Beneath The Shining Water*, from 2004. I've been very impressed with that level of romantic, spiritual writing. Also **Sam Smith**, particularly Writing's On The Wall, the James Bond track. Both very emotional things. **Joe Bonamassa** too.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

The Beatles' *Revolver*. As a 16-year-old, it seemed as if the music had grown up. The lyrics were more evolved, other instruments were creeping in, it was sonically very, very interesting. Another all-time favourite is *Highway 61 Revisited*.

Tina K, H. Hawkline

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

It was **The Shadows**' Man Of Mystery from a small record shop in Victoria. Heavy stuff for a nine-year-old. I still think it's a great melody, very kind of film noir. At the time Woolworths did cheaper copies of what was in the chart on the Embassy label, but in this case, I spent several weeks' pocket money getting the real thing.

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

Hearing **Brian Jones** on I Wanna Be Your Man was the first time I really heard a guitar solo that seemed to really rip. There were great guitar solos from both Keith and Brian, so at that time, I probably wanted to be at least one Rolling Stone. But I'm very happy to be me.

What do you sing in the shower?

I sing long notes and practise vibrato. That pleading quality.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

To go with a swing, *A Night At The Opera*. The all-out joyous aspect of **Queen**.

And your Sunday morning record?

Art Garfunkel's *Watermark*. A beautiful, gentle album and an absolute masterpiece. A great singer, and most of the songs are by Jimmy Webb. Maybe I'll listen to that over breakfast on a sunny day, out in the garden.

Steve brings his 25-date Genesis Revisited – Foxtrot at Fifty + Hackett Highlights tour to the UK in Sept/Oct.

Ryley Walker

SIX STRINGS GOOD

What music are you currently grooving to?

I enjoy **Tomberlin**. Best tunes I've heard in a minute. I envy the restraint she has. Super psychedelic. Also really enjoyed *Winter Hallucinations* by my friend **Sam Goldberg**. He's a Cleveland native who was and is a big part of the Midwest synth-and-noise scene going back to the mid-noughties.

What, if push comes to shove, is your all-time favourite album?

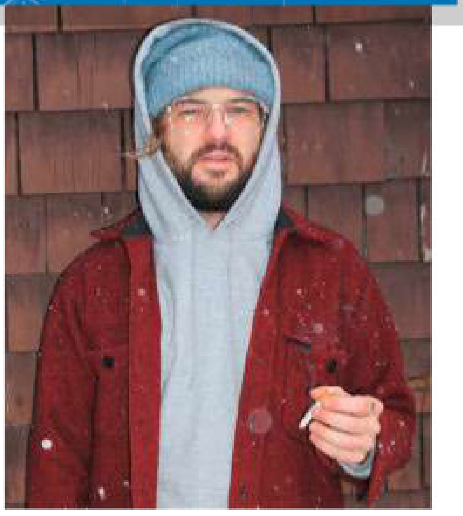
I always say *Physical Graffiti*. Just makes sense. It's the best, right?

What was the first record you ever bought? And where did you buy it?

The CD single for **R.E.M.**'s Man On The Moon. I'd seen the Andy Kaufman biopic and loved their song in it. Went to a store in Rockford, IL called Media Play to purchase it. Giant store. The size of a used car lot. I think it's bulldozed now.

Which musician, other than yourself, have you ever wanted to be?

Never had that fantasy. Most of the musicians I like had heart disease and died at, like, 38. I can say that people like **John Abercrombie**, **Derek Bailey**, **Steve Hackett**, are all people I admire greatly and wish I could emulate better.



What do you sing in the shower?

I sit in silence and weep.

What is your favourite Saturday night record?

XTC, *English Settlement*. I have dark and cryptic Saturdays. I hate going out.

And your Sunday morning record?

Mark Eitzel, *West*. One of the all-time great, great song records. Incredibly sad, incredibly funny. The whole thing is kinda talking about the "oh boy" element of waking up on a Sunday. It's very shut-in with private thoughts of being a city slicker. I love Mark so much and I think this to be his finest hour. I'm trying to quit smoking and this record doesn't help. Great to smoke cigarettes to.

Post Wook by Andrew Scott Young/Ryan Jewell/Ryley Walker, and much else besides, is out now on Husky Pants. See huskypantsrecords.bigcartel.com

> "*Physical Graffiti*. It's the best, right?"
> **RYLEY WALKER**

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Theories, rants, etc.

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IN AN ISSUE OF NME FROM AUGUST 1963, George Harrison is found at a table in Liverpool's Blue Angel club, considering what he might do in the future. There's enthusiastic talk of opening a go-kart track; Adam Faith is interested in investing. "Weird stuff" with a tape recorder, that involves John Lennon's poetry. Perhaps, eventually, even songwriting. "I haven't bothered in the same way as John and Paul," he admits, "though I'd like to have a stab sooner or later."

George Harrison's time as a great songwriter would come soon enough. But as the extraordinary Get Back series makes so tangible, being heard was not always easy for this most self-effacing of Beatles. "I've got a few slow ones… if you want?" he offers hesitantly, as the quartet struggle for inspiration in Twickenham Film Studios.

This month, we examine how George's songwriting genius emerged. We pinpoint his 30 greatest songs. And we uncover a revealing Paul McCartney interview about his old friend, and how tricky it was to give him what he wanted when "John and I were writing some… good stuff."

As, it transpires, was George. Given the opportunity to play one of those slow songs in Twickenham, he opts for one with "no solo or anything complicated". Its title? All Things Must Pass. Already a masterpiece, it doesn't make the cut.

JOHN MULVEY, EDITOR

It is symbolic of our struggle against oppression

Reading the obituary of the Angelic Upstarts singer Mensi [MOJO 340] brought back fond memories of a gig of theirs I attended in the Refectory Café at Newcastle University in the late 1970s. At the point that Mensi produced a severed pig's head wearing a policeman's helmet, the venue was raided by baton-wielding police in full riot gear. We dived under a table, giggling in terror, as a mass brawl broke out around us. We escaped unscathed with long-lasting memories of a unique evening.

Paul Williams, via e-mail

C'mon, what've you been up to, my lad?

I was glad to see that Dimitri 'Dee Pop' Papadopoulos of the Bush Tetras got a mention in Real Gone [MOJO 338]. I met Dimitri when he was a guest at the Catskills hotel where I worked in the kitchen on my summer break from college. We would hang out in his room getting high and listening to the Allmans and Bowie. I went to my first Grateful Dead show with him and stayed at his house. Fast forward eight years, I'm working my first post-college job and I see his byline on a record review in a Buffalo, New York paper. I saw his college band The Secret open for Patti Smith and later took a date to see Mink DeVille, Rockpile, and Elvis Costello and had a bite with Dimitri and his girlfriend before the show. He had transformed himself from a spotty hippy teenager into this elegant Mod punk. I lost track of him until seeing his obituary, not knowing he had changed his name.

Mike Spak, Colorado

Bloody miracle, sir

Deep thanks for the World Party article [MOJO 338]. For longer than I've subscribed to this publication, Karl Wallinger has been a hero: pop wunderkind, recluse, Beatles freak. I've travelled far and near for a deep dive of *Arkeology*. To learn more about a band I've loved all this time is all the reason I count the days for the next MOJO to arrive and to pen my first note to you in 25 years as a reader. Best wishes for a safe, healthy and musically delicious 2022.

Eric Silver, via e-mail

Oh, yeah, yeah, there's one. But otherwise, we're solid…

I really enjoyed your 1971 Nuggets article [MOJO 339] and it certainly stirred some ghosts. I pored over many of those album sleeves in record shops weighing up whether to make a purchase. It also reminded me just how narrow the opportunity to hear new music was in 1971. It was either through the evening programmes on Radio 1, or you borrowed records from one of your mates. And if it hadn't been on the radio, your mates probably didn't have it anyway. The only other way was to take a chance based on a favourable review in one of the weekly magazines, a high-risk strategy as I recall. Anyway, off to investigate all that I missed the first time round.

Jim Moss, Wimbledon

…In the summer of 1971 I was a long-haired 16-year-old lad with dodgy flares and bad acne, on holiday at my granny's house in Coatbridge when Top Of The Pops came on the TV and Buffy Sainte-Marie appeared singing Soldier Blue. I was blown away and the next day I hopped on a Baxter's bus to Airdrie, ran into John Menzies and snapped up this recently-released LP. Excitedly I played it but winced when I heard the f-word. My shocked granny advised me to take it back to the shop, bless her, but that didn't happen. One of the first albums I bought and it still plays frequently on my turntable. Consider yourselves admonished for not mentioning this classic piece of vinyl in your ace 1971 Nuggets piece.

David Graham, Corby

…Led Zeppelin weren't the only band to release an untitled fourth LP in 1971. Slightly less celebrated is the fourth and final album by Worcester, Massachusetts soft-rockers Orpheus – in fact, I seem to be the only person who likes it. I gather they were initially part of an over-hyped "Bosstown Sound" movement (circa 1968) which may have raised suspicions at the time. For their fourth LP, Orpheus were down to a duo of founder member Bruce Arnold plus newcomer Steve Martin (disappointingly neither the Steve Martin from The Left Banke nor the future Hollywood comedian and sometime bluegrass guitarist). The great Bernard Purdie guests on drums. Martin seems to have staged something of a coup, but the LP didn't sell and Orpheus broke up soon after.

Pete Rae, via e-mail

You've got to think for yourselves! You're all individuals!

I have collected vinyl albums for more than 40 years and enjoyed your list of lesser-known gems from 1971. Your list was strongly Anglo-American-directed, although you managed to squeeze in Bröselmaschine, Flower Travellin' Band and Supersister. To rectify this, I have assembled my European Top 10. A lot of these albums are still quite unknown outside their home countries. Thanks to fellow collector Haaken Eric Mathiesen for assisting me in this momentous exercise – we ended up with about 200 albums. The rest of the world? Oh, that would mean at least another 100 LPs…

1. Junipher Greene – *Friendship*
2. Krokodil – *An Invisible World Revealed*
3. Aphrodite's Child – *666*
4. Paroni Paakkunainen – *Plastic Maailma*
5. Culpeper's Orchard – *Culpeper's Orchard*
6. Wigwam – *Fairyport*
7. Pan & Regaliz – *Pan & Regaliz*
8. Amon Düül II – *Tanz der Lemminge*
9. Panna Freda – *Uno*
10. Sogmusobil – *Telefon*

Dag Erik Asbjørnsen, via e-mail

At least it gets you out in the open air

Thanks for Tom Doyle's article on Pink Floyd's forgotten gem *Obscured By Clouds* [MOJO 340]. As someone who's made a few records in my time, I find it staggering that they were able to pull this one out of the bag in 12 days, written and recorded. And surely Stay remains testament to the quiet and unsettling genius of Rick Wright. Had to give it a spin after reading the article and I'm happy to say it's still my favourite Floyd album.

Andy Frizell, Institute Of Popular Music, University Of Liverpool

Look, you've got it all wrong

Regarding your Album Of The Year [MOJO 338] – I think you've gone soft in the head. Floating Points & Pharoah Sanders' *Promises* is such a boring record. I have not heard such rubbish since *Metal Machine Music* by Lou Reed. Disappointing!

Ken Daykin, Ipswich

Oh I say, that's very nice

Thank you so much for the wonderful articles on The Monkees and Michael Nesmith in MOJO 340. Highlighting Nez's creative work with The Monkees and as a gifted solo artist is greatly appreciated.

Fred Velez, Red Lion, Pennsylvania

Incidentally, this record's available in the foyer

I would say joining the MOJO subscription train is the best decision I've made in many a year, but it puzzles me why there is no mention of Marillion. I'm not too fussed about their incarnation with Fish as lead singer, but with Steve Hogarth as frontman for me the band have made some of the most interesting rock music of the last 30 years. It would make a lot of people happy to see them shown a bit of MOJO love.

Gary Page, Eastbourne

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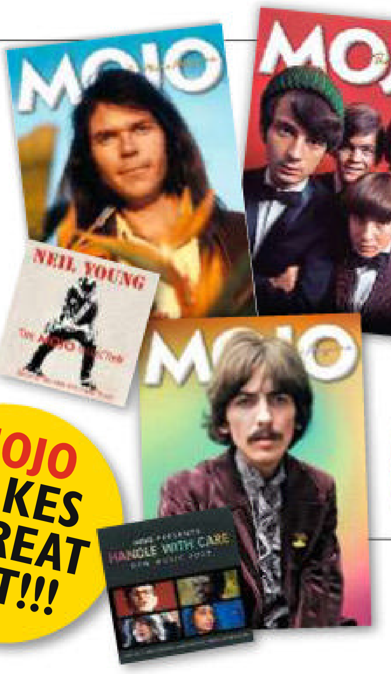

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WHAT GOES ON!

THE HOT NEWS AND BIZARRE STORIES FROM PLANET **MOJO**

Years of the Bat: the man and the myth in his understated pomp; (above) Meat Loaf singing Bat Out Of Hell on-stage with Karla DeVito, 1978; (below) with songwriter Jim Steinman.

A 'Loaf Supreme

The mighty **Meat Loaf**, the force of nature who brought the epic, crazed and fantastical to rock, left us on January 20.

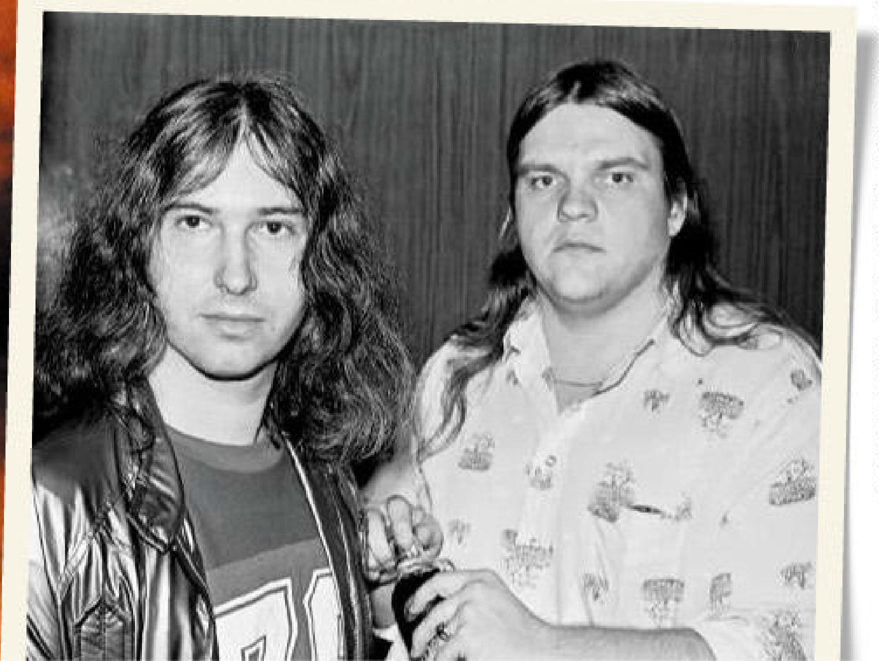
"DO YOU THINK if I chose a stage name today, I'd call myself Meat Loaf?" the singer and actor born Marvin Lee Aday asked MOJO in 2013. "Nobody in their right mind would call themselves Meat Loaf." But Meat Loaf, who died on January 20, understood the value of his name.

Meat (as he liked to be called) brought the bombast of Wagnerian opera and the sentimentality of an Andrew Lloyd Webber musical to hard rock. His most famous work, 1977's *Bat Out Of Hell*, would go on to sell 44 million copies and make him a household name.

Aday was born in Dallas, Texas, on September 27, 1947, and acquired his nickname while playing for his high school football team. "But names and ages piss me off," he once warned. "So I continually lie."

His true passion was music and drama, and he moved to Los Angeles and formed his first group, Meat Loaf Soul, in 1967. Having grown up with jibes about his weight, he created a larger-than-life persona to match. "He was a real theatrical character," said his friend Alice Cooper. "Like a Pentecostal preacher on-stage."

After touring with the musical Hair, Meat joined singer Shaun 'Stoney' Murphy on the album, *Stoney & Meatloaf*, released on Motown subsidiary Rare Earth in 1971. It was a modest hit, but afterwards Meat returned to musical theatre, where he met aspiring songwriter Jim Steinman. The pair started pitching Steinman's rock-opera/musical Bat Out Of Hell in 1974. Nobody was interested. Meanwhile, Meat appeared in the original theatre production of The Rocky Horror Picture Show and its 1975 movie version.



Bat Out Of Hell was rejected by almost every record company in America, until Todd Rundgren agreed to produce. Rundgren loved the work, but presumed its death-wish anthems and teen-angst mini-dramas were a parody of Bruce Springsteen's *Born To Run* LP. This was Meat Loaf's eternal dilemma. He was playing a character, but also deadly serious. "I was never a parody of anyone or anything," he insisted.

Heavy touring and drug use took its toll on Meat Loaf's voice, and a follow-up, *Dead Ringer*, didn't appear until 1981. A UK Number 1, Cher duet Dead Ringer For Love was also a UK Number 5 hit. Meat and Steinman later fell out. The singer's career had dipped in the US, but he enjoyed further UK Top 10 hits with 1983's *Midnight At The Lost And Found* and '84's *Bad Attitude*.

> "I was never a parody of anyone or anything."
> **MEAT LOAF**

Meat changed his birth name to Michael and appeared in movies throughout the '80s and '90s, including Roadie, Wayne's World and Fight Club, where he wore 28lb fake breasts in the role of beleaguered cancer sufferer Bob Paulson.

Meat Loaf and Steinman reconciled for 1993's *Bat Out Of Hell II: Back Into Hell*, with I'd Do Anything For Love (But I Won't Do That) giving Meat his first US and UK Number 1 hit. They continued the franchise with 2006's *Bat Out Of Hell III: The Monster Is Loose*, and collaborated on his final album, 2016's *Braver Than We Are*.

By then, Meat Loaf had been diagnosed with the heart condition, Wolff-Parkinson-White Syndrome. Other health issues had contributed to his decision to stop touring after 2013's Last At Bat Tour. Meat Loaf had been an outspoken critic of Covid mask mandates and compulsory vaccination. At the time of writing, the cause of his death was unknown.

Mark Blake

Trinity Mirror/Mirrorpix/Alamy, Getty (2)

Murdoch-ument and eyewitness: (clockwise from main) Stuart gets focused; Sarah Martin fights introversion; (from left) Bobby Kildea, Chris Geddes and Richard Colburn claw for the light.

BELLE AND SEBASTIAN DESTROY DELUSION, EMBRACE DHARMA ON CLUBHOUSE LP II

THE DAY BEFORE MOJO's Zoom call with Belle And Sebastian, their European tour was cancelled. "I'm really glad actually," says singer and multi-instrumentalist Sarah Martin. "I was thinking, God, we'll be lucky if we get three days into it without us all having it…"

The Covid era has impacted on the Glasgow indie institution in other ways. They'd planned to record in glamorous Los Angeles in 2020, with Adele/Killers/War On Drugs producer Shawn Everett. "He's very hot just now and we had this opportunity to work with him," says singer, guitarist and keyboardist Stuart Murdoch. "Of course, that's when Covid struck. It was very, very Belle And Sebastian timing."

After a rescheduled visit later in the year also got canned, they decided to do some renovations at their "clubhouse" in Finnieston – named in The Times as one of the top 20 Hippest Places To Live In Britain in 2016 – and do it right there. "I've not enjoyed our clubhouse in the past," says Murdoch. "It was always dirty, damp. But I personally have had a more focused recording experience than practically ever before. In fact, I can't imagine a more positive way of spending lockdown."

> "I've not enjoyed our clubhouse, it was dirty, damp…"
> **STUART MURDOCH**

After spending "two or three months" rigging up the clubhouse for studio recording, work commenced in February 2021 and continued until December, with the band and regular engineer Brian McNeill producing. Murdoch, whose personal piano room was decorated with posters of LA and San Francisco, says his main contributions this time involved programming beats and adding synth chords, which the band would then build on. "I don't think we've done much of that in the past," he says. "But as not everybody was available at all times, we made it work to our advantage."

"When things started to kind of come into shape, it all happened really quite quickly," says Martin. "I remember Stuart saying that he thought it was going to be quite introspective, and there were a couple of my songs that I knew I didn't want to be introspective. Over the course of making it, the scale of things became more expansive."

With horns, strings, discreet electronics and classic pop melodies, the album's wistful indie pop with soul, disco and country flavours proves the clubhouse plan paid off (the Adele factor was saved when they sent some recordings to Everett to finish off). Murdoch's interest in Buddhism is apparent ("there's Dharma in pretty much every song I wrote!" he says), while other tracks bear the imprimatur of The Smiths, though Murdoch says they're written by "the least Smithsy people in the band." Elsewhere, he explains, there are sombre moments of the kind life throws up: "The songwriting stance is, with the darkness behind you, you're facing towards the light, absolutely clawing for the light and clawing to get out of there."

During the process, Martin mentions "quite a bit of drama. There's always drama," but they decline to elaborate. "It was nothing too crazy," says Murdoch. "Everything was pretty smooth. We're very comfortable in each other's presence and Brian's never lost it with us. I think with humour, and just by being quite genteel with each other, that's how you manage to keep going."

Ian Harrison

FACT SHEET

Title: TBC

Date: TBC

Production: Belle And Sebastian, Brian McNeill

Songs: Prophets On Hold/Young And Stupid/Deathbed Of My Dreams

The Buzz: "I'd never assume to impinge any style on anybody else. We have our multiple writers, and it's always a case of delivering the individual song the best you can and then you make your best compilation tape out of them." *Stuart Murdoch*

ALSO WORKING

…**BONNIE RAITT**'s (right) *Just Like That…* is expected in April …**ANNA CALVI**, announcing their birth of her daughter Elio, has told her listeners, "I can't wait to play you what I've been writing. I have some new music coming out soon" … **FONTAINES D.C.**'s third LP, *Skinty Fia*, arrives in April. Regular foil **Dan Carey** produces …**FATHER JOHN MISTY**'s *Chloë And The Next 20th Century* also arrives in April. Songs include Goodbye Mr Blue, Buddy's Rendezvous and Kiss Me (I Loved You) … **Peter Buck** and **Krist Novoselic** have both played on the new LP by Cuban singer and guitarist **HECTOR TELLEZ**. Ex-Screaming Trees/Mad Season man **Barrett Martin** played drums and produced …**ALTERED IMAGES** – that's **Clare Grogan** and **Steve Lironi** – release new album *Mascara Streakz* in August. **Bernard Butler** and **Bobby Bluebell** from The Bluebells also contribute …the New York Times reports on a new **SHANE MACGOWAN** (right) LP, with singer **Johnny Cronin** of County Longford band Cronin saying, "It's still punk, and it's still Irish, and it still goes to the heart." He added they'd completed 20 tracks, including seven originals of previously unrecorded MacGowan lyrics and a Doris Day cover …**xPROPAGANDA** – AKA **Claudia Brücken** and **Susanne Freytag** of ZTT cults Propaganda – release new LP *The Heart Is Strange* in May. It's produced by **Steve Lipson**, who worked on Propaganda's 1985 LP *A Secret Wish*, and echoes its predecessor's high-gloss sound: "It never seemed right that the story stopped," they say…

Getty (2), Cheryl Dunn (3)

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TUE / 14 JUNE / LEICESTER DE MONTFORT HALL
THU / 16 JUNE / OXFORD NEW THEATRE
FRI / 17 JUNE / BATH THE FORUM
SUN / 19 JUNE / PORTSMOUTH GUILDHALL
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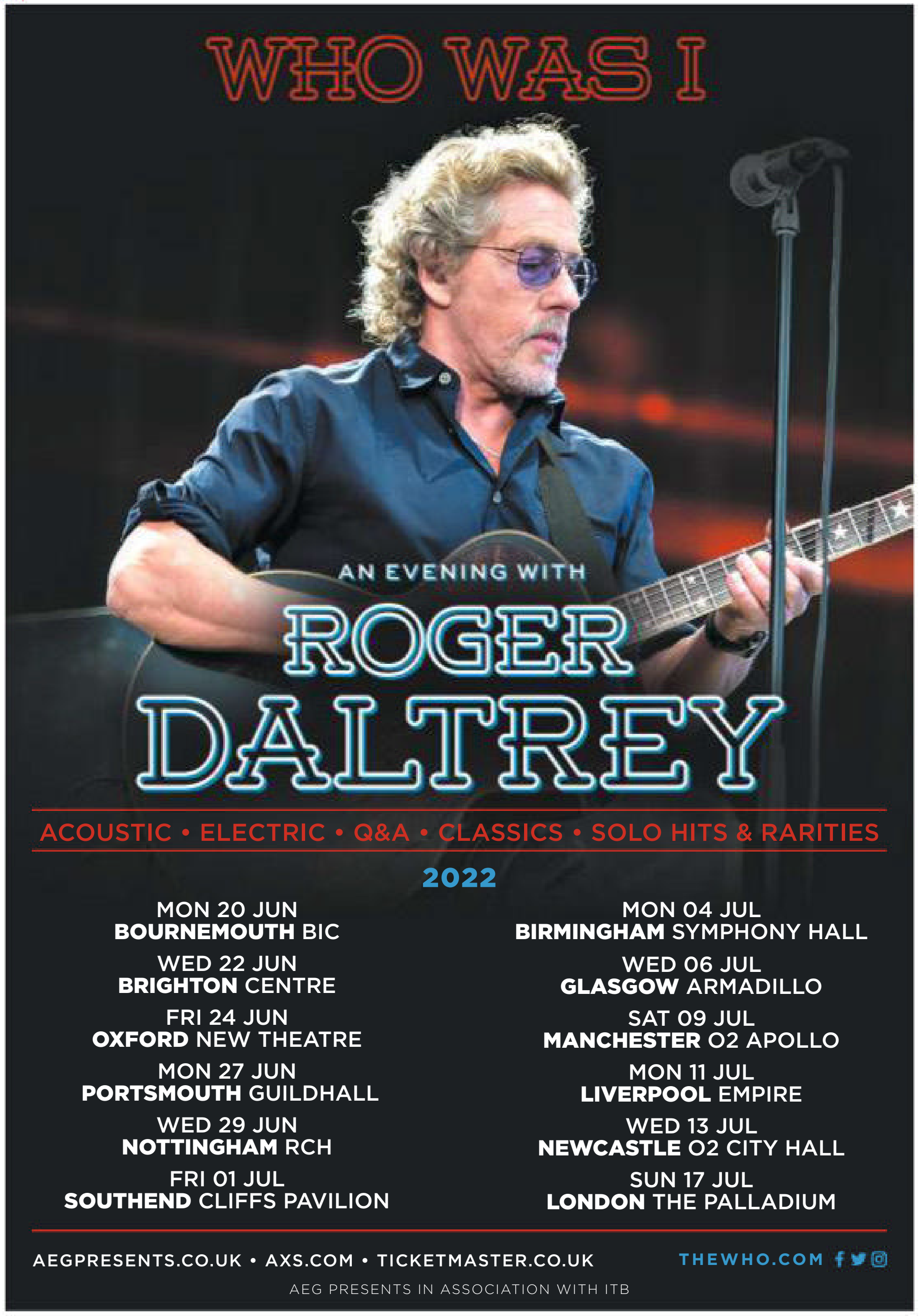

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BIRMINGHAM SYMPHONY HALL
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Winters' tales: (clockwise from above) Edgar stakes his claim in 2022; Johnny (left) and his bro support Kiss on the Destroyer Tour at the Atlanta Fulton County Stadium, August '79; looking suave in NY in 1975; the new single and album.

O Brother, Where Art Thou

Edgar Winter and friends from ZZ Top, Eagles and The Beatles pay tribute to late blues sibling Johnny.

"I THOUGHT SINGING these songs was going to be kinda sad and sombre, but it turned out to be really joyous and uplifting." Edgar Winter's talking about *Brother Johnny*, his newly-recorded tribute album to his elder brother, the late, great blues-rock guitarist Johnny Winter. "The blues is about transforming suffering into joy," he goes on. "I really believe that is a great part of what the blues does."

His starry cast of sidemen includes Billy Gibbons, Ringo Starr, Joe Walsh, Joe Bonamassa, Keb' Mo', Derek Trucks and others, all united in salute of loud, fast and to-the-point pioneer guitar hero Johnny.

Eyevine, Getty, Bogdan Frymorgen

With shoulder-length cotton-white hair – both brothers were born with albinism – playing a Gibson Firebird and singing in an urgent howl, the Texan met with roaring media acclaim. Columbia paid an unprecedented $600,000 advance to sign "the whitest white blues man" in 1969 (a year earlier Led Zeppelin received $200,000 from Atlantic). When Johnny formed a rock-oriented band with Rick Derringer as second guitarist, an arena-level concert draw was born. And Winter – with the drugs, the girlfriends (briefly Janis Joplin), the rehab – seemed the hard-living, hard-loving wild man of rock incarnate.

But Edgar says his brother was a conflicted icon. "He was torn between the blues and rock. He had the drive to be a star and he dedicated himself totally to that end. And when he achieved everything he hoped for – the recognition, the adulation – he hated it. I remember him telling me, 'I never thought it would be like this. I feel so isolated, so alone, I don't know who I can trust. Everybody has an idea of who I am based on this image. Nobody sees the real me.'" It was no surprise to Edgar when Johnny returned to the blues in the mid '70s to produce and play on the Grammy-winning albums that revived the career of Muddy Waters.

Johnny and his brother, almost three years younger,

> "Both being albino, we had a uniquely different mindset."
> **EDGAR WINTER**

Johnny B. Goode
by Edgar Winter
FEATURING Jo

Edgar Winter
Brother Johnny

grew up in a music-loving household in Beaumont, Texas. “We were inseparable as kids,” says Edgar. “I think we had a relationship different to anyone else, learning to play music together, and both being albino we had a uniquely different mindset and world view.” Was their condition a problem at school in the ’50s? “In a way,” he says. “But if you’re too fat or too short or too thin, kids are going to pick up on that. Johnny had a different way of handling it. He was the extrovert and I was the introvert. He had the drive and the ambition. He was Johnny ‘Cool Daddy’ Winter with the pompadour and the girls.”

While his elder brother seized the guitar and the blues, Edgar’s interests strayed further afield – R&B to jazz, and classical. If Johnny had the axe, Edgar took everything else – alto saxophone, keyboards, percussion. He also became an arranger – skills that would eventually win the ultimate prize, a 1973 US Number 1 single with funky-prog instrumental Frankenstein.

But before that, Edgar played in bands led by Johnny: “I did Woodstock with him. At the time people didn’t even know he had a brother. After his trio had played the first part of the show he introduced me to the crowd, I walked out and it was kinda, ‘Ah OK, so there’s *two* of them.’”

Since Johnny’s passing on July 16, 2014, making *Brother Johnny* was partly about acknowledging a debt. “Johnny is my all-time musical hero,” says Edgar. “If it weren’t for him I certainly wouldn’t be where I am today.”

The album is a mix of Johnny Winter songs, stage favourites – Jumping Jack Flash, Johnny B. Goode – and two originals by Edgar. “I didn’t want to do a nostalgia album or a soundalike album. I feel Johnny had a depth and scope that most people are unaware of,” he says, citing the moody and haunting Stranger, originally on the *John Dawson Winter III* album. “It shows a more vulnerable, artistic side that he doesn’t usually like to reveal.” Michael McDonald sings Stranger on *Brother Johnny*, Joe Walsh plays guitar and there’s a guest contribution from Ringo Starr, whose All-Starr Band regularly features Edgar. “I don’t think Ringo plays on many people’s albums, but he said, ‘I’ll do it for you.’ It’s got all those trademark signature fills from him.”

Edgar, now 75, is pretty sure Johnny would admire the results. “The question was, do I do a straight blues album and pay tribute to the great legacy that Johnny left, or should it be more a dedication from me to my brother and based more on my preferences, and what I think he would like to hear? I tried to make a balance of both. I hope I’ve succeeded.”

John Bungey

Brother Johnny is released by Quarto Valley Records on April 15. Info: www.quartovalleyrecords.com

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LAST NIGHT A RECORD CHANGED MY LIFE

Stuart A. Staples

Tindersticks’ inimitable voice kneels before Townes Van Zandt’s ***Our Mother The Mountain*** (Poppy, 1969).

Our Mother The Mountain **is an album I often return to. Like old friends, we have an understanding. And like the best of friends, there is never a need to impress.**

Townes’ songs never try hard to gain your attention, you always feel like you are happening on them. There can be immense sadness but it’s never over-wrought, and his natural humour always balances. The insights are conversational, never presented – take them if you want. And the plain beauty and honesty of it all.

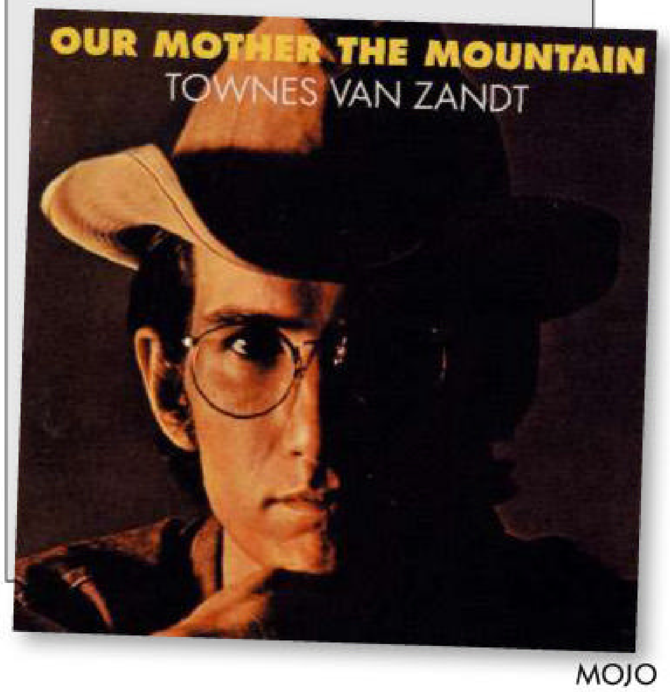
In 1990 I got a job at the Rough Trade shop and moved from Nottingham to London. I was used to working in record shops. Some days are really busy but there are also many dreamy afternoons discovering music. I started to notice the final CDs in the filing system were by an artist called Townes Van Zandt. These albums had been sitting there since the shop opened some four years earlier.

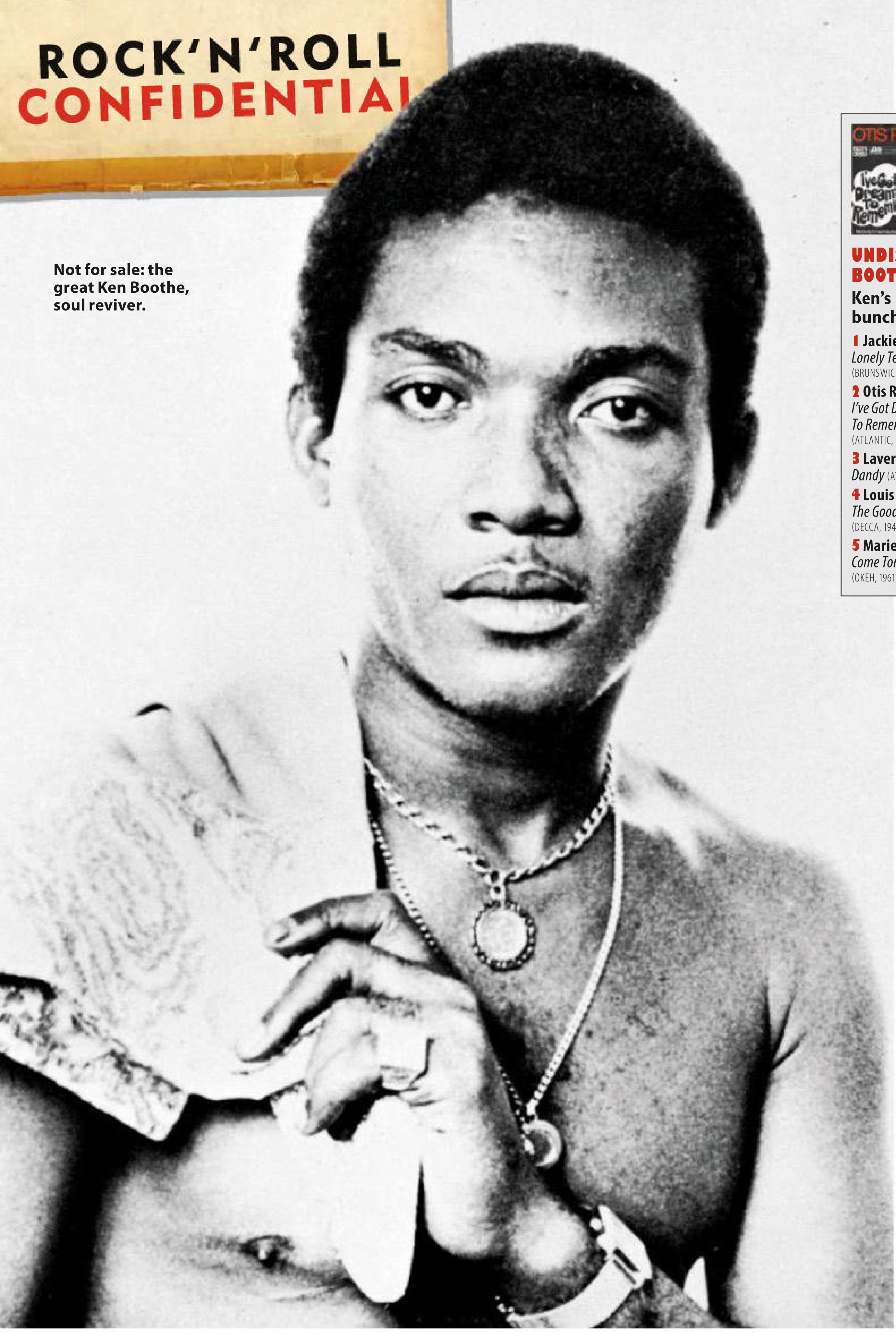
One of those afternoons I decided to see who this guy was, arbitrarily picking out *Our Mother The Mountain*. Nothing really happened, then Kathleen came on, I played it again, then again: “But I ain’t in the mood for sunshine anyway.” I know…

In ’91 I was at the Reading Festival. I made the decision to not watch Nirvana, and find the small tent on the edge of the festival where Townes was playing with Guy Clarke. It was a watershed moment, I left something behind that night and gained something much greater. I experienced a real humanity in music, maybe for the first time.

Over the last 30 years Townes has become a musical companion to me, the songwriter I return to most. In his lifetime people didn’t give a shit about his songs but I am not sure that mattered to him. There was bigger stuff going on.

Past Imperfect: The Best Of Tindersticks ’92-’21 is out on March 25 on City Slang.





Not for sale: the great Ken Boothe, soul reviver.

KEN BOOTHE

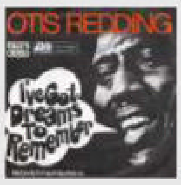
The reggae elder on number ones, losing everything and fighting back.

BORN IN DENHAM Town, Kingston, Jamaica, Ken Boothe brought soul, grit and emotion to reggae. From ska beginnings as half of Stranger [Cole] & Ken for producer Duke Reid, through rocksteady with Coxsone Dodd, he moved on to recordings for Trojan with Lloyd Charmers, including his cover of Bread's Everything I Own, a 1974 UK Number 1.

Wrongfooted when Trojan folded in 1975, he pushed forward into dancehall, was namechecked on The Clash's (White Man) In Hammersmith Palais in '78, received Jamaica's Order Of Distinction in 2003 and never stopped singing. Now 73, he used lockdown to record his kids LP *Wait For Us* and Tell Me Why, a mournful roots recorded with west London's Soul Revivers for their *On The Grove* project.

How did you become involved with the Soul Revivers?

They sent me music and asked me to write lyrics and sing. I wrote the song with my son. It's about how we spend too much time fussing on our Androids [phones] and not enough time building communities. As singers we have to lead the way, lift people spiritually. We live in a divided world, there is always so much fighting when we should be uniting for the children.



UNDISPUTED BOOTHE

Ken's favoured bunch of five.

1 **Jackie Wilson** *Lonely Teardrops* (BRUNSWICK, 1958)

2 **Otis Redding** *I've Got Dreams To Remember* (ATLANTIC, 1968)

3 **Lavern Baker** *Jim Dandy* (ATLANTIC, 1956)

4 **Louis Jordan** *Let The Good Times Roll* (DECCA, 1946)

5 **Marie Knight** *Come Tomorrow* (OKEH, 1961)

Your own childhood in Denham Town was poor financially but, you say, spiritually rich.

Exactly. We had no money but my mother loved singing and when I was 10 she took me to the YMCA. I didn't know the words to the songs but I made them up, and once I started to sing I knew that was my purpose. My mum made me realise that and my friend Stranger Cole made it happen.

Stranger Cole was recording for Duke Reid at the time.

I was 15 when he took me to audition for Duke Reid. He lent me his trousers, because I didn't have any smart ones to wear, but they were so tight I couldn't zip them up. When Duke Reid saw me he asked Stranger if the fat little boy could sing. When he heard us do [1964 hit 45] Unos Dos Tres he sent us straight upstairs to record it. Then we went to Coxsone Dodd, he was like Jamaica's Motown. I took off in the UK with Nat King Cole's When I Fall In Love in 1967. The UK was the first country outside Jamaica to embrace Caribbean music and put it in the charts.

Lloyd Charmers, your producer at that time, wasn't set on you recording Everything I Own, was he?

Initially Lloyd Charmers said no. He liked to be in charge and choose the songs. But I needed one more to finish my album, and when I had been touring in Canada a friend had played me Andy Williams' version of Everything I Own and said how I must record it. David Gates of Bread had written the song about the loss of his father, but I turned it into a love song and the studio owner said if it didn't get to Number 1 she'd sell the complex! I was sat on my veranda smoking weed when the postman came with a telegraph telling me it was a breaker in the UK and would I sing on Top Of The Pops? I was touring and couldn't make it the first time, so they made a film of someone else miming it in the shadows and everyone thought it was me.

Trojan went bankrupt in 1975 and left you high and dry.

I was in New York when I heard. I flew to London to the office and it had been abandoned. It was heartbreaking, I lost everything, but I am philosophical. I went back to Jamaica and picked myself up and I am still singing Everything I Own when I perform today.

Tell us something you've never told an interviewer before.

I have tears coming from my eyes while I am talking to you. The world can be a cruel place but it means so much that people still love me. I may be old and nothing lasts forever, but as long as I still have my voice and there are people listening, I will keep singing. God is good.

Lois Wilson

> "Stranger Cole lent me his trousers."
> **KEN BOOTHE**

Ken Boothe sings on Soul Revivers' On The Grove, out March 11 on Acid Jazz.

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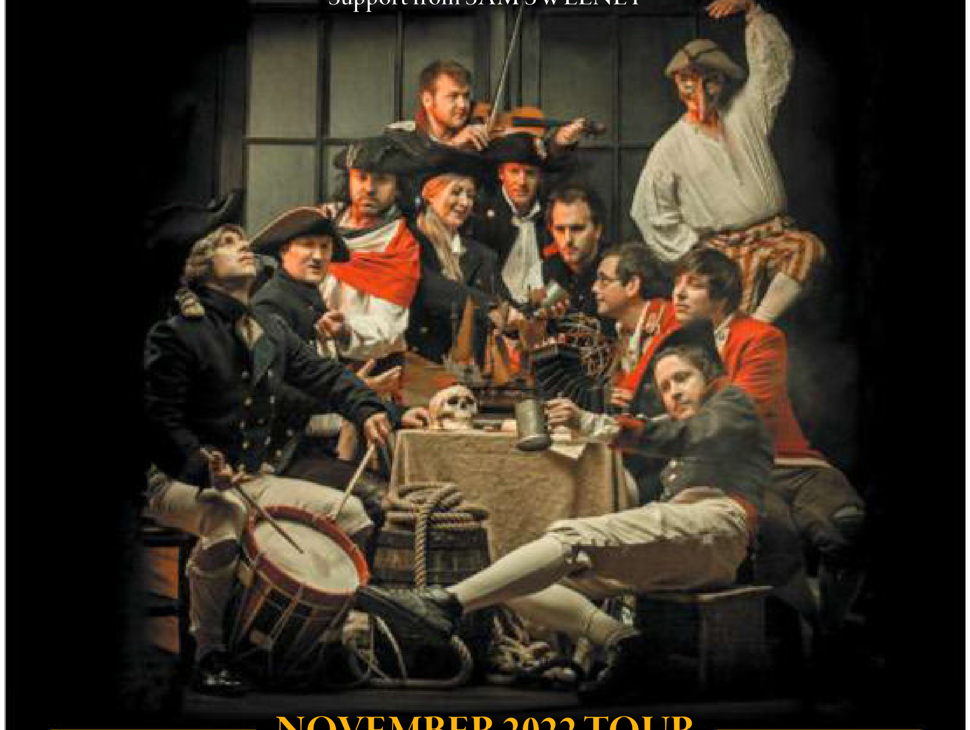

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SAT 12 LEICESTER De Montfort Hall
SOLD OUT CAMBRIDGE Corn Exchange
MON 14 LONDON Royal Albert Hall
TUE 15 BRIGHTON Dome
WED 16 SOUTHEND Cliffs Pavilion
THU 17 IPSWICH Regent Theatre
SOLD OUT BATH Forum
SAT 19 PLYMOUTH Pavilions
SUN 20 CARDIFF St David's Hall
MON 21 BIRMINGHAM Symphony Hall
TUE 22 NEWCASTLE O2 City Hall
WED 23 NOTTINGHAM Royal Concert Hall
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FRI 18 NEWCASTLE, NEWCASTLE UNI*
SUN 20 PORTSMOUTH, GUILDHALL
MON 21 CAMBRIDGE, CORN EXCHANGE
WED 23 MANCHESTER, O2 RITZ
THU 24 BATH, FORUM
FRI 25 LEEDS, BECKETT UNI
SUN 27 BIRMINGHAM, O2 INSTITUTE
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WED 13 BIRMINGHAM O2 INSTITUTE2
THU 14 LONDON ROUNDHOUSE
TUE 19 BRISTOL O2 ACADEMY
THU 21 SHEFFIELD LEADMILL
FRI 22 GLASGOW ST LUKES
SAT 23 MANCHESTER ALBERT HALL

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I'm Free: John Otway gets ready for some high-octane rustic lunacy, 1977.

Getty

UNSINKABLE DUSTMAN-TURNED-POP STAR JOHN OTWAY RACKS UP 5,000 GIGS

"IT STARTED very early, drinking ink in the school playground," recalls enduring rock outsider John Otway. "I knew I'd attract an audience. It turns your pee blue."

Attention-seeking has stood him in good stead. The Aylesbury-born free spirit turns 70 this year and, before his birthday, reaches another landmark: his 5,000th gig. "I never thought I'd retire," he declares. "Up to late 1976 I was a dustman which I quite liked, I was quite fit. But the driver said, 'If you don't stop doing this, you'll be doing it when you're 60.' I was horrified. I wanted to be a pop star."

> "I defined being a pop star by being on Top Of The Pops."
> **JOHN OTWAY**

His first attempt came in 1972, when John and his on-off straight man Wild Willy Barrett recorded bluegrass-infused ditty Misty Mountain. After a first bust-up with Barrett, Otway self-issued the single with his as the sole credit. John Peel played it, Pete Townshend heard it and offered to produce them – as a duo. Townshend-produced singles from '73 and '76 failed to click, but the pre-punk do-it-yourself boldness had created interest.

When it arrived, punk allowed idiosyncratic souls through the door, and the duo hit big with edge-of-collapse, cock-eyed single Really Free in 1977. Otway's scooting around the stage on a wheeled amplifier, turning somersaults and sticking a microphone in his mouth while whooping, as well as the fuzz guitar teamed with country moves, acquired a new logic. "High-octane rustic lunacy" was critic Jon Savage's 1977 take. "Being shocking and not very good was in vogue," avers Otway now. "John Lydon was a fan. Later, I did a song with Glen Matlock – Halloween on the *All Balls & No Willy* album."

Gracing Top Of The Pops with Really Free and a legendary October 1977 Old Grey Whistle Test appearance where the singer hopped onto an amplifier, slipped and suffered an eye-watering groin impact, meant adieu to the dustcart forever. With or without Willy or hits, albums accumulated and the fan base grew. In 2002, his modest but redoubtable following propelled disco oddity Bunsen Burner into the Top 10 in time for Otway's 50th, and a second TOTP appearance ensued.

"I defined being a pop star by being on TOTP," says Otway. "If you got in a cab and said you were a pop star, they'd ask if you were on TOTP. Being on TOTP are the high spots."

He's written two autobiographies and attention-grabbing exploits were never far, such as an abortive 2006 world tour by plane and 60th birthday-marking movie Rock And Roll's Greatest Failure. As he approaches this new landmark, Otway's happy with his lot. "I've brought up a family, do as many gigs as I want, where anyone can chat with me. Quite a pleasant position. But a 'cult hero'? My band would say, 'Did I hear that right?!'"

Kieron Tyler

John Otway plays his 5,000th gig at Shepherd's Bush Empire with his band on April 2, 2022.

WAY OUT OTWAY

Three ways into John's world.

John Otway & Wild Willy Barrett

(EXTRACKED RECORDS/POLYDOR, 1977)

The Who's management's label Track wouldn't issue this John Otway & Wild Willy Barrett album, so they did it themselves. After John Peel's support, Polydor picked it up and single Really Free triumphed. The early years' definitive account.

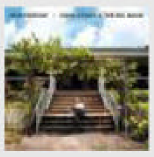
Where Did I Go Right?

(POLYDOR, 1979)

Busting up with Wild Willy meant Otway ploughed on solo with Neil Innes as his producer. Features the dramatic version of Alfred Noyes' The Highwayman, but is otherwise orderly – pop, but still wonky.

Montserrat

(RED BOWLER, 2017)



Post-mid '90s volcanic eruptions, Otway decided he'd be the first to record at George Martin's Caribbean island studio since The Rolling Stones made *Steel Wheels* there. "You wake up to all the gold records," he says. "So you have to do something that isn't rubbish." A late-blooming gem.

Bare-chested developments: Otway rocks the Soca Cabana, Montserrat, September 2016.

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SUN 29 SHEFFIELD CITY HALL
MON 30 LONDON ROYAL ALBERT HALL
TUE 31 LONDON ROYAL ALBERT HALL

JUNE 2022

THU 02 GATESHEAD SAGE
FRI 03 GLASGOW ROYAL CONCERT HALL
SAT 04 MANCHESTER O$_2$ APOLLO
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02 BIRMINGHAM O$_2$ INSTITUTE
04 MANCHESTER ALBERT HALL
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FRI 18TH MARCH BELFAST EMPIRE MUSIC HALL
SAT 19TH MARCH DUBLIN THE NATIONAL CONCERT HALL
MON 21ST MARCH LIVERPOOL ARTS CLUB
TUE 22ND MARCH LEEDS IRISH CENTRE
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Chris Almeida

> “It is about courage and love.”
> **ALABASTER DEPLUME**

PEACE, LOVE AND POETRY! THE HEALING JAZZ ADVENTURES OF ALABASTER DEPLUME

“THANK YOU for being a human!” says Alabaster DePlume as our Zoom call begins. “Thank you for living!” A skinny, hyperactive, Manchester-born thirty-something composer, saxophonist and activist, Alabaster, or Gus Fairbairn to use his given name, is equally at ease asking MOJO questions (“What do *you* think people need, Andrew?”) as answering them, and punctuates the interview with such encouraging statements as, “Thank you for working in journalism. Such noble work!”

Unlikely exhortations have been part of Alabaster’s music and poetry since he started recording in the early noughties, though most fans probably discovered him via 2020’s compilation of non-vocal works, *To Cy & Lee: Instrumentals Vol. 1*. A serene, delicate collection, assembled from eight years’ worth of under-the-radar releases, it called to mind everything from the hovering lightness of Ethiopian jazz to the gossamer melodies of Celtic and Japanese folk, and struck a chord with a multitude of listeners in the early days of lockdown, many of whom sent Fairbairn heartfelt messages of thanks.

“It felt like a strange, warm lightness but also a weight of responsibility,” says Fairbairn. “I put it out to create calm, but I didn’t know there was going to be a pandemic. That was not part of my plan.”

Raised in Manchester by teacher parents, Fairbairn was a heavy metal kid who recorded a “goofy pathetic” heavy metal LP while still a teenager, before leaving home to travel the world as an itinerant poet, “Completely drunk all the time,” he says. “Stomping around the audience screaming about my pig. It was ridiculous.”

Fairbairn became an accompanist for Manc singer-songwriter Liz Green. “I was her saxophonist around Europe,” he says. “That’s how I learned to play softly because Liz is very quiet.” While In Manchester, Fairbairn also worked for the Ordinary Lifestyles charity, teaching adults with learning disabilities, including two men called Cy and Lee. “We added music-making to part of our work, music that would embody a certain calm.”

Eventually, realising a fearless break needed to be made, Fairbairn moved to London and found a home for himself at Hackney music collective, The Total Refreshment Centre. “This community changed my life,” he says. “I did a show to launch my album *Peach* in December 2015, with lots of different performers, and they said I should do that every month. I started giving ownership to the musicians, to make it interesting because I couldn’t do the same gig every month. It became my job to discover what was going on in London every night.”

That’s how Fairbairn became a driving force in the London jazz scene, collaborating with drummer Sarathy Korwar and The Comet Is Coming and Soccer96 linchpin Danalogue. It’s also how he managed to enlist a different set of musicians every day for two weeks to record his forthcoming magnum opus, *Gold*. Underpinned by the mantra of “I will not be safe, I will be magical” and distilled from 17 hours of music, *Gold* moves from the serene to the chaotic, the restive to the restful, incorporating everything from sinewy Fela-style funk exhortations and hungry post-punk bewitchments to ethereal ECM gospel jazz, and cinematic collectivist lullabies. “If the reason for *To Cy & Lee* was to help people have peace,” says Fairbairn, “the reason to make *Gold* is to give people courage and love. It’s how I made it, it’s what it’s about. It’s what we need next.”

Andrew Male

Alabaster DePlume’s Gold is released by Lost Map/ International Anthem on March 12.

FACT SHEET

- For fans of Ethiopian jazz, John Surman, Arthur Russell, Alice Coltrane, Jarvis Cocker.
- “The name Alabaster DePlume came about when I was walking up Upper Brook Street in Manchester dressed quite strange. Someone driving past leaned out of his window to share with me what he was feeling about me. But he was driving so fast that he didn’t have time to make a real sentence. He could only make a sort of noise, and the noise he made sounded to me like ‘Alabaster DePlume!’ So I couldn’t argue – that was my name.”
- Tattooed on Gus’s right hand are a line of small stick figures that represent everyone he’s been in the past. “The poet, the traveller… I have killed them off,” he says. “But they served a purpose.”

KEY TRACKS

- Mrs Calamari
- Again (feat. Falle Nioke)
- Visitors XT8B – Oak

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AMAZONE ROKIA KONÉ STEPS OUT OF MALI AND INTO THE WORLD OF U2 AND R.E.M.

"I WAS A little shocked when I heard the finished songs on my album for the first time," laughs Rokia Koné down the line from Bamako. "They sounded so different, not typical of the sounds we hear in Mali. Whatever the style or genre – jazz, reggae – I will give it a go, but what you play in Europe may not be popular here, and vice versa."

It's hardly surprising, for the 38-year-old from Ségou, a bend in the Niger River renowned for its blues musicians, has taken a circuitous route to releasing her solo debut. Firstly, she doesn't come from a griot family, the traditional musical caste – the Konés are nobles – and she grew up a tomboy, with a talent for football. Nine years ago, she started singing professionally for local star Aliya Coulibaly. "He taught me a lot, then one day told me I was ready to go solo, to sing at weddings and perform gigs on my own. There comes a time when the mentor should release the trainee with their blessing."

After playing Bamako's clubs for a couple of years, she started recording, only to be immediately head-hunted to join the pan-African, female-led supergroup Amazones d'Afrique in 2016. Her solo career was put on hold for their two albums and European dates, although she continued working on her debut on the wing, finally completing it in August 2020. Shortly afterwards, however, there was another twist in the tale when producer Jacknife Lee heard what she had done as an Amazone.

"I did not know anything about him and I'm not familiar with the bands he worked with before," Koné admits. But, separated by 4,000 miles, they swapped ideas online. Koné sent Lee her recordings, and he would pick up a guitar line, isolate a drum, add electronic elements. "I had no idea how to approach this but I love that naivety," admits Lee, the Ireland-born, California-based producer whose previous collaborators include R.E.M., U2 and Taylor Swift. "I kind of knew where I was going and now *Bamanan* feels like the thing I had always wished to do."

> "Lee brought radical ideas. It's unique!"
> ROKIA KONÉ

"He experimented with what we had already created," adds Koné, "and brought radical ideas to the arrangements. I love what he has done, he's brought a new perspective to my music. It's unique!" Finally, the world may be ready for "the Rose of Bamako", and vice versa.

David Hutcheon

Rokia Koné & Jacknife Lee's Bamanan is out February 18 on Real World Records.

FACT SHEET

- For fans of Oumou Sangaré, Kandia Kouyaté, Amadou & Mariam
- Koné's biggest influence is Molobaly Traoré (1966-2009), a traditional singer from Ségou. "She sang old songs, full of advice, talking about the concerns of women and children, and that is a very important part of my music."
- If you happen to be in Bamako, Koné can usually be found singing at reggae superstar Tiken Jah Fakoly's Radio Libre club or Mama Africa.
- European shows are pencilled in for the spring, and Koné and Lee are even hoping to meet up at one…

KEY TRACKS

- Shezita (Take A Seat)
- Kurunba
- N'yanyan
- Mayougouba

Amazone delivery: Rokia Koné, "The Rose of Bamako", prepares to launch her solo debut.

Credit in here

MOJO PLAYLIST

Buckle up! For trip-reggae, folk hymnals and belt-loop boogie.

1 HORACE ANDY SAFE FROM HARM

The Kingston veteran of yearning, epicene voice emotes the Massive Attack classic over thumping reggae. From his new Sherwood-produced LP *Midnight Rocker.*
Find it: *streaming services*

2 WET LEG TOO LATE NOW

A taster from the smart indie duo's debut LP, this elegiac reflection on "sleepwalking into adulthood" comes across like sunshine pop Joy Division impatient to motorik off.
Find it: *streaming services*

4 TAJ MAHAL & RY COODER I SHALL NOT BE MOVED

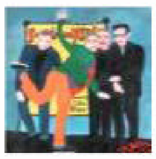
Two veterans protest with harmonica and footstamping, in a barn. From LP *Get On Board: The Songs Of Sonny Terry & Brownie McGhee.*
Find it: *streaming services*

3 THE SMILE THE SMOKE

Funk shuffle, minimal rhythmic guitars and elliptical brass finds Yorke vaporously imagining soul-immolation, as the Afrobeat post-rock diffuses into the night sky.
Find it: *streaming services*

5 ROLLING BLACKOUTS C.F. THE WAY IT SHATTERS

Triple-guitar action Melbourne quintet throw open the curtains to usher in a new LP of post-isolation melodic transcendence. Inhale…
Find it: *YouTube*



6 SUBWAY SECT COMMERCIAL SUICIDE MAN

Produced by Mick Jones, loose cocktail-punk ponders success-vs-art. "I don't titillate the ladies, I'm too camp for the men." Sing it, Vic!
Find it: *Moments Like These* (GNU INC)

7 KURT VILE LIKE EXPLODING STONES

KV's long lie-in of a voice set to clip-clopping drums, phased synth and a slowly ascending melody that's as lushly unself-conscious as any American stadium icon.
Find it: *streaming services*

8 SUICIDE GIRL (UNRELEASED VERSION)

Majesty and enigma via $2 rhythm box and ice rink synth, as Vega shakes and shivers fit to burst in '77. From new best-of *Surrender.*
Find it: *streaming services*

9 CONFIDENCE MAN FEELS LIKE A DIFFERENT THING

One-fingered piano house, breakbeats, gospel choirs, snare rolls – the early-'90s, KLF-down-under synthesis is strong.
Find it: *streaming services*

10 WEATHEREDMAN & THE NOISE NATURAL FORCE

Leeds duo bring slabs of guitar and pitching drums for a QOTSA/glam/thumbs-in-belt-loops boogie. From *Become The Data*, out on wax on the MT label.
Find it: *streaming services*

© Michael Moodie, Karen Paulina Biswell

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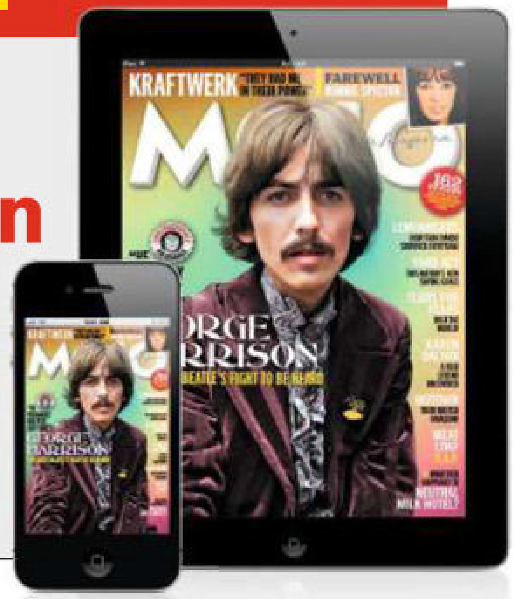

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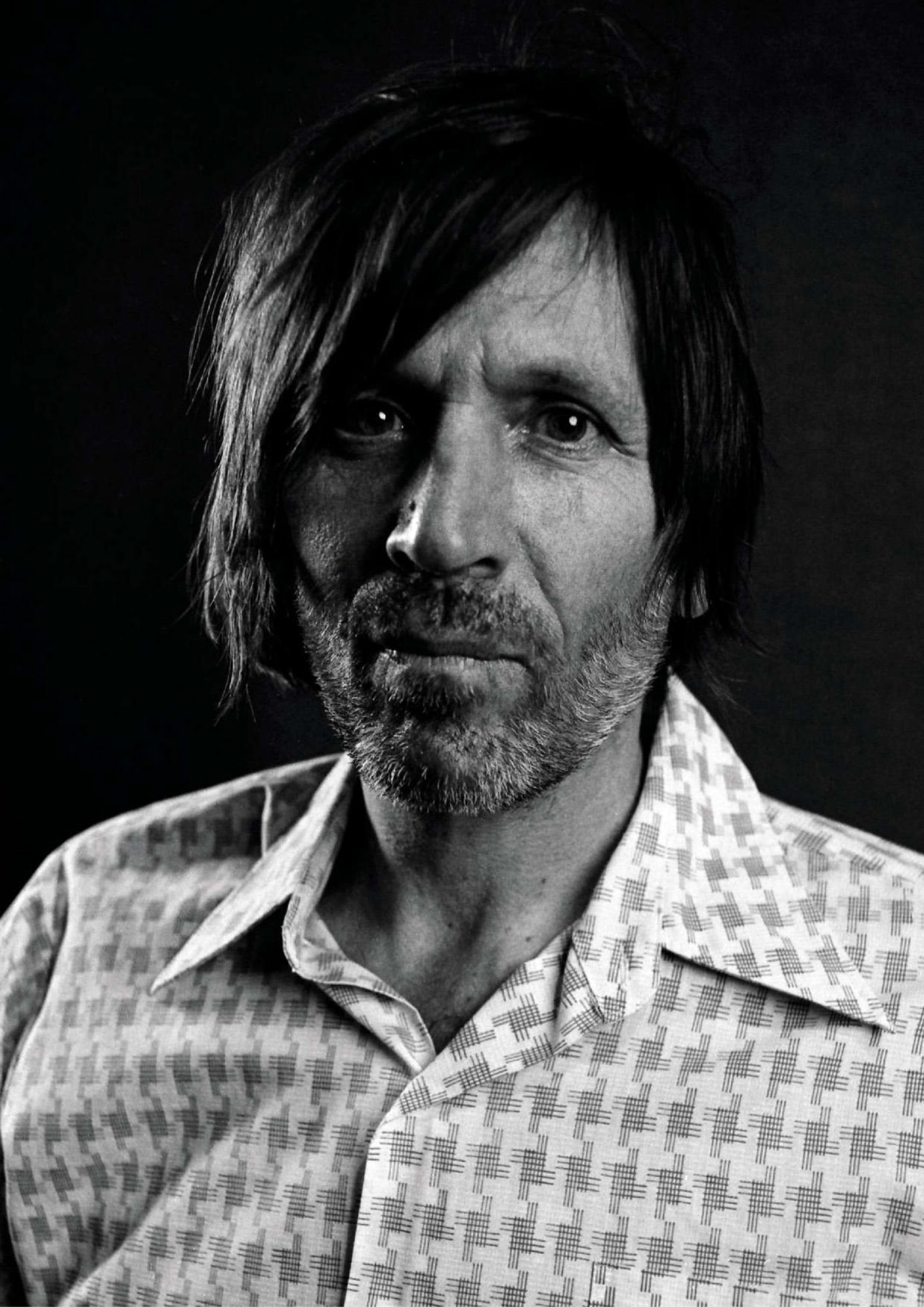


How the "lovable puppy" of The Lemonheads went to the dark side and took his time crawling back. With *It's A Shame About Ray*'s 30th birthday in sight, is it time for him to grow up? "I'm trying my best," insists Evan Dando.

Interview by **ANDREW MALE** • Portrait by **ALYSSE GAFKJEN**

IT'S A COLD, BRIGHT DECEMBER MORNING in Martha's Vineyard and Evan Dando is out to buy cigarettes. "I'm staying in a hotel because the heat's not on at home," the 54-year-old singer explains.

'Home' is his father's old farmhouse, which he now shares with bass player Farley Glavin, and despite the early hours he sounds good, bright, a note of optimism in his voice that wasn't there when we spoke a week earlier, towards the end of an 18-date US tour. Then, he looked and sounded beat down, like he was feeling all of the 35 years he's been on the road with, or as, The Lemonheads.

"It's been an adventure," he says, a word he keeps coming back to, sometimes with flickers of irony, and it's how he regards his rock'n'roll life from the earliest years as a punk-pop outsider on the edges of Boston's late-'80s hardcore scene to the more sketchy present. It's a career arc that will always be defined by his breakthrough with 1992's *It's A Shame About Ray*. Accorded a 30th anniversary reissue next month with added B-sides, demos and bonus tracks, it's a welcome reminder of when Dando, with pin-up looks and easy charm, offered tender respite from the cathartic scream of grunge. But success came with emotional fallout that went public when the worse-for-wear singer turned up two hours late for a set at 1995's Glastonbury Festival, and ended with Dando being checked into Connecticut's Silver Hill mental hospital after suffering a breakdown at Sydney Airport.

The years that followed saw creative highs such as the dark beauty of 1996's *Car Button Cloth* and the vulnerable ache of 2003 solo LP *Baby I'm Bored*, but since 2009 the only official Lemonheads releases have been *Varshons I* and *II*, a brace of admittedly gorgeous covers albums. In between there have been relapses, disappearances and long periods of writer's block. If Dando seems reluctant to analyse his songwriting in any great depth for MOJO, for fear, he says, that it might break "the mystery", he talks about the highs and lows of his life with honesty and a perceptible timeworn melancholy.

"I just recently got off heroin again," he explains when I ask how he's been. "I hope I'm being humble in my recovery but, man, that was a bad one."

This was following the death of his father, Jeffrey, in July 2021 and he says, "That was a motherfucker right there. It's such a fraught relationship to begin with, the father-son thing, but when they die you remember all the amazing stuff."

You were born in Essex, Massachusetts. Your mum, Susan, was a former fashion model, your dad Jeffrey was a real estate attorney. What were they like when you were growing up?

Really interested in sports. I don't know if that was to mask underlying tensions but they would just go flat out from one thing to the next: surfing, skiing, climbing up Mount Washington. They were always doing crazy physical activities. And we travelled a lot. Something was definitely going on underneath but we had a lot of fun. My first memory was when we went to Costa Rica, before I was even one year old. We got stuck in the crab migration, crabs advancing down the beach. They wrapped me in this sail so the crabs wouldn't get me.

What kind of music was around the house?

All soul music, on cassette. Al Green, James Brown. My dad was super into Stevie Wonder's *Music Of My Mind*. Very memorably he stopped and ➢

WE'RE NOT WORTHY

Buffalo Tom's **Bill Janovitz** on his "rock star" friend.

"Evan always had rock-star charisma and a deep wellspring of talent. I remember him emerging from the bathroom at the Camden Underworld in 1994 and taking my guitar and asking, 'Is it OK if I sing a song to your lady?' Despite his state, he slayed my wife with Outdoor Type. She'll never forget it."

Lily Rose Garceau

➤ pulled over on the bridge into Boston to listen to Love Having You Around: "Every day I want to fly my kite." The Four Freshmen too.

You started writing songs around 10 and your parents divorced when you were 11. You've said that was the sand in your oyster and the songs were a kind of catharsis.

Yeah, that was the first era of having music that I wrote myself. I wasn't really proud of them. The song Frank Mills from Hair was a huge influence on me. As far as writers go, I loved James Joyce, Angela Carter. I got a lot from her: "A walking masterpiece of remembered pain" [from 2006's Poughkeepsie] is from her. Books were huge. But it wasn't until I started writing songs like Stove [on 1990's *Lovey*] that anything felt like 'my thing'. Writing songs to get stuff *out* of yourself, to get at the pain and the things that have gone wrong, the things that are bothering you. It definitely works.

What kind of school kid were you?

A bit of a loner. I know everyone says that but I wore weird clothes like dashikis and '60s folk clothing and had long blond hair. I got a little bit teased for that but not in a bad way. Well, I got punched out, bottles thrown at my face, stitches in two places because I hadn't cut my hair in a while.

It's weird to look back at that first Lemonheads line-up. You were formed at [elite private school] Commonwealth School. Ben Deily went to Harvard and became a Creative Director, Jesse Peretz is now a film director and…

We were the most bougie band ever. I got some shit from Jesse for saying that but what are you going to do? That was reality. But Jesse is the whole reason I have a career in music. He was an incredibly good hustler and knew what to do. Make a record, get it on Harvard Radio [where he was a DJ] and exploit that to the fullest. You know, use your nepotism or whatever. I was in amongst a lot of people way richer than me all the time.

You became part of the Boston music scene from '86 to '88. That was a pretty rich time, wasn't it? Throwing Muses, Dinosaur Jr, Pixies, Buffalo Tom…

It was amazing. I was looking back at some old English newspapers and someone wrote "Lemonheads are my seventh favourite Boston band" and that was *good*! When I was in the Blake Babies [circa 1989 mini-LP, *Slow Learner*] we shared a practice room with Pixies and we were just thinking, Is this normal? Are bands *this* good? Is life really this amazing? Sometimes you'd watch them and just want to go home. Why bother? They were so good.

You said Stove was where your songwriting voice started to emerge but it also seems that your mini tour of Australia in July 1991 was hugely important. What was the initial inspiration for going there?

Dan Peters from Mudhoney. He was in Screaming Trees at the time, we were playing with them on this terribly ill-fated package tour with Die Kreuzen. No one came. It was like 50 people every night and we were like, "We should go to Australia, I hear it's like England in the sun." And Dan was like, "Just go! You're gonna love it." And I did, because Dan said go.

You met these simpatico people there like [writing partner] Tom Morgan from Smudge and [future Lemonheads bassist] Nic Dalton. How do you look back on that time now?

Super next-level fun adventuring. I mean, it definitely led to some weird shit but it was really great for a long time, just doing music with these other people. Tom, Nic but also [co-writer of Into Your Arms] Robyn St Clare and that was really great. I regained my initial innocence.

You write songs that sound like they've come easily, so people don't hear the struggle. Compared with Pixies and Nirvana, whose songs sounded like they were wrenched from their insides, yours sounded like they'd been plucked from the air.

It was also about discovering who I really was. There's a lot of melancholy on *It's A Shame About Ray*. I tend toward that. Good frowning music. Confetti is about my parents' divorce. I was really dumbstruck when my dad left. My mom and sister would tend to hang out together and I was, "Wow, I'm all alone." In a way I suppose it was really good for me to realise that so early on but, man, it was hard for a while. I had to do some work on entertaining and comforting myself. You know, by writing songs.

You said at the time that the success of *It's A Shame About Ray* made you a paranoid person because you thought, This is too easy. I'm going to get my comeuppance.

It was a tough business. That was a weird time because everyone was looking to everyone else and our record company didn't know what they were doing at all. Nirvana came along and we realised we were in the right place at the right time and we could get some money from it. We didn't object to good luck. Of course, you later discover it wasn't so good.

There's a lot of pain in those songs, but your image in the music papers at the time was of the lovable puppy dog on drugs. You're a smart guy. Was your defence mechanism to…

Not be smart? Well, you'd see the pain if you were reading carefully but the overall thing was, This kid's keeping it Good Times, you know? On my part I thought maybe it would be funny to give these people what they wanted. But it backfired. If they think you think they want it, they don't want it. It got much worse

A LIFE IN PICTURES

'Head shots: Dando down the years.

1 Zest for life: a young Evan, aged six, before becoming a Lemonhead.

2 No direction: The Lemonheads (from left) Corey Loog Brennan, Dando, Jesse Peretz, Ben Deily, West Berlin, June 11, 1989.

3 Dressed to impress: with Björk for a magazine cover shoot, November 3, 1993.

4 The "super next-level fun adventuring" years: on-stage at the KROQ Weenie Roast, Irvine, California, June 12, 1993.

5 "Oasis were really nice to me": Dando tries to get in on the act with (from left) Bonehead, Liam and Noel Gallagher, August 30, 1994.

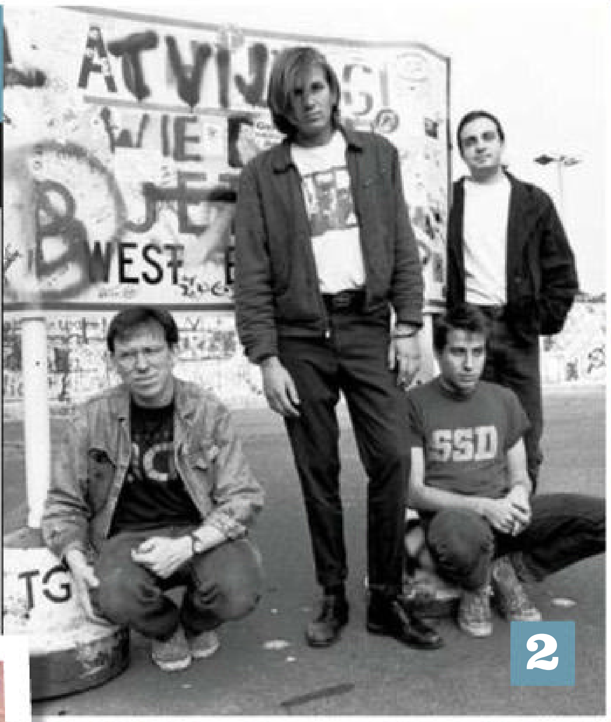
6 My Hug Buddy: Evan with Sean Lennon, New York, March 15, 2004.

7 It's a shame about spray-paint: Dando in his back yard, Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, April 18, 2019.

8 "Whatever makes you feel scared you should do": Evan on-stage with the re-formed Lemonheads (bassist/housemate Farley Glavin pictured), Bloomington, Indiana, November 10, 2021.

9 "It's been an adventure": Dando enjoys another night on the tiles, 1993.

Courtesy of Evan Dando, Greg Allen, Camera Press/Ed Sirrs, Getty (3), Topfoto, Eyevine, Alamy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later but I knew I was playing with fire. It was never as bad for me as it was for my friends and family reading these articles. If you're dancing on the edge of a cliff it's much more scary for the ones watching.

At the end of Glastonbury 1994, when you probably should have had some time off, you went on the road with Oasis, wearing Kurt Cobain's old coat, a gift from Courtney Love.

Yeah. I remember we were in Ireland and these Irish kids were tripping really badly and I was like, "Put the coat on, put the coat on", and when they put the coat on they started feeling OK. So I started bringing the coat around to people having bad trips. That was actually pretty fun. Courtney also gave me an extra bottle of Kurt's [prescription opioid] Buprenorphine. It had his name on it. (*Laughing*) I wish I had it now so I could sell it.

Re-reading some of the on-the-road stuff with Oasis, they said some pretty cruel things about you. Didn't [Oasis sound man] Mark Coyle say it would be funny if you died on the road with them?

It *was* funny. I know it looks worse for people that were watching from afar but Oasis were really nice to me. Those two weeks before *Definitely Maybe* came out were super amazing but when I said goodbye they were a little worried about me. I'd been on tour for so long that nothing else made sense. So I kept going.

The wheels visibly started to come off at Glastonbury 1995. When we met in 2003 you explained that you'd turned up late to your own gig because you were doing heroin in a cottage three hours away from the site.

Yeah. I should have known I wouldn't get back in time. I should just not have come back at all. That was fucked. I couldn't get through the crowd that was there to see me. Personally, I had fun that day. Getting booed by Portishead fans? I threw a bottle back at them and no one dared throw another one at me. I think people were like, 'This is not your normal entertaining tragedy. This is a little too real.'

Up to that point you'd been going to Australia for recuperation breaks and to get off heroin, but the trip in 1995 ended up with you being sectioned. What happened?

Well, back in the day I'd do heroin for a couple of days and stop. Not get addicted. This was the first time I had a habit and I did the usual thing of getting to Australia, taking some speed the first day, ecstasy the next and then a bit of acid. That was when I started feeling withdrawal but I didn't know what it was. The combination of no sleep, drugs and withdrawal sent me into a really bad trip and I got wicked paranoia and started imagining things. I would wake up every morning around five and go walking around giving people flowers, imagining gun-sights on my face, feeding dollar bills into drains hoping they'd take me back to America. Then I went to the airport with no ticket and I didn't pay my taxi fare and that was when the police came and I was like, They're coming! Finally, this makes sense! And I was wrestling with all these cops at the airport. I was bleeding and in handcuffs and they were super nice.

I think, deep down, there was some weird, ridiculous thing on my part that I wanted to try and reunite my parents, and they did both come to the airport to take me to Silver Hill. My sister chose Silver Hill to make it a little more fun because that's where Edie Sedgwick was sectioned. So even then there was a little comic twinge to everything.

> "Someone wrote, 'Lemonheads are **my seventh favourite** Boston band' **and that was *good*!"**

The Lemonheads album you made after your time in Silver Hill, *Car Button Cloth*, is effectively a solo album with just you, some session musicians and Dinosaur Jr's Murph on drums. I remember you saying at the time that "we made no concessions to make a popular album".

That's the kind of music I wanted to make. I love that record. It also sounds so much better than *Come On Feel The Lemonheads*. It's all about the wicked minutiae but with a dark side. Thing is, I was drinking all fucking day and no one wants to see someone drinking 40 drinks a day because they get to be an asshole and lose their inhibitions and everything sucks. But I was very careful to do everything right artistically.

Right down to the album cover with your childhood drawing: "All of these things sank…"

OK, that wasn't my childhood drawing. I found it on the street in Glasgow and the record company made me make up a story about it. I didn't draw it. You can tell. In the upper left-hand side it says "2p". I thought, This is awesome. Serendipity. There is a sadness but there is a joy in it.

➢

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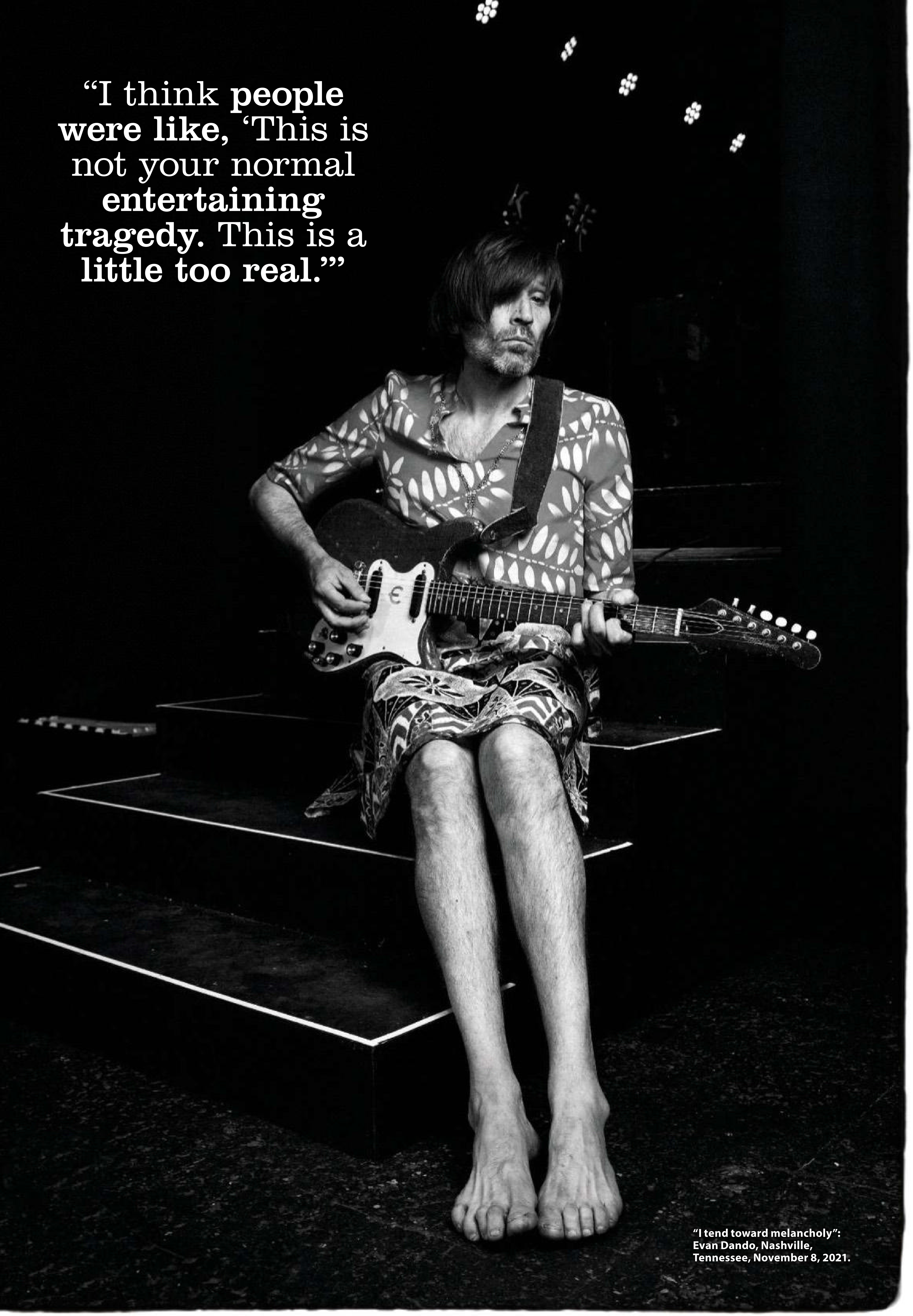
“I think **people were like,** ‘This is not your normal **entertaining tragedy.** This is a **little too real.**’”



“I tend toward melancholy”: Evan Dando, Nashville, Tennessee, November 8, 2021.

Around that time you said you were going to recuperate by going skiing in Aspen but you somehow ended up in a New York crack den, house-sitting a pair of Rottweilers.

That was the end of 1997, around the time [Swell Maps founder and singer-songwriter] Epic Soundtracks died, which hit me hard. It was announced in the same issue of MOJO as Michael Hutchence's obituary. I really liked Michael but I just knew Epic would have been so pissed off about that. So, yeah, I was staying at the house of this kid who was a club owner in New York and that was the dark time.

How did you escape that world?

Friends. I've always just been lucky that way. I eventually made it to Aspen, and I was there for a long time, getting healthy. I was still drinking too much but doing a lot of skiing, and going back to Martha's Vineyard.

It was around then that you met your future wife, Elizabeth Moses.

Yeah. We were living in New York and our apartment was in the shadow of the World Trade Center as it came down on 9/11. When it was happening I was thinking, Oh, this is that thing, that thing that your whole life leads up to. It was like I knew this was gonna happen my whole life. In any footage of 9/11 you can see our apartment. That experience was so traumatic it threw us in together. We were like, "We're gonna get through this…" We didn't move out but we should have done. Our apartment looked straight into the hole. It was too intense to hold onto that for that long.

How did it end with Elizabeth?

Partially through some drug problems. Things were going great for five/six years, and then started to go a little not so great. Then it just crashed and fell apart. Funnily enough, Kurt's sweater – which Courtney also gave me after he died – was going to be my divorce settlement. It was worth a lot. I said, "Take it". But she didn't even want anything from me. She was like the coolest lady ever. She moves on always. Doesn't look back. Apparently she's in Finland now but none of her friends have heard from her. I've got to get a hold of her to finalise the divorce. If she's reading this: get in touch.

Her encouragement was hugely important in the making of your 2003 solo album, *Baby I'm Bored* – a great record that seemed to offer a template for a way forward for you as a solo singer-songwriter.

Yeah, I'm really proud of that record. We did it the right way. Like *Car Button Cloth* we recorded way too many songs and Elizabeth was really good at sequencing it and I just kept plugging right along and finally stopped touring it around 2004.

The songs on that album, whether it's Ben Lee's Hard Drive, Tom Morgan's My Idea or your own compositions, they sound like safe spaces. Do they play that role for you?

That's exactly what they do. It's like a little haven and that's the thing I like most. You know, back in the day you'd hear from lots of kids: "Your songs got me through this time…" That's the coolest thing to hear. It's great.

What happened between 2003 and *The Lemonheads* album in 2006?

I went into the studio around 2005 with [Descendents drummer] Bill Stevenson and I met [Descendents bassist] Karl Alvarez on a tour in South America. I love that band so much and Bill's an amazing guy, really fun to work with. I don't know. My friends, who don't understand the music industry, were like, "Hey, this is really good! Why isn't it doing better?" Well, see, you can't just make a good record and have it do well any more. That's not how it happens. Was there any kind of publicity budget for it? I guess not. Should I have released it as the second Evan Dando album? My friend Raphael de Rothschild used to say, "Never change the name of your band." So I was thinking about him [Rothschild died of a heroin overdose in 2000]. But, yeah, it doesn't matter (*sighs*).

Alysse Gafkjen

You sound tired.

Every time I make records I'm tired. I'm trying my best. Maybe I'm not a natural but I love it so much I can't give it up. I still think I'm going to do something better than I did before. Songwriting is like fishing. It's all about waiting. You wait with your guitar until something comes in from somewhere else. Then there are the ones you spend a long time on that are never going to be OK, never as good as the ones that happen all at once.

Were the *Varshons* covers albums from 2009 and 2019 a kind of therapy, a way to keep doing it even when the new songs weren't biting?

There's something in that for sure but those are things to help you do a little touring, you know? You gotta survive. I'm trying to come up with another record, and I really think I'm ready to address it now because a lot of the drama that surrounds songwriting is 'heroin-time'. I was never relaxed when I was doing that stuff. You think, Hey, I'm so relaxed! But it's the furthest thing from relaxation when you're high on heroin. You are really fucking uptight. Fuck that stuff. It's just too sad to see someone like that. Too sad.

CHILDREN OF EVAN

Dando's bittersweet fruit, picked by **Andrew Male.**

THE PUNKY JUVENILIA

Lemonheads

★★★

Lick

(TAANG!, 1989)

Although pretty much a mish-mash of new songs, leftovers and re-recordings following Dando's acrimonious split with fellow founding member Ben Deily, this curious stop-gap of an album represents Lemonheads Mk 1 at their finest. A mix of raw Replacements-style garage pop and Dando's new-found talent for romantic, introspective melancholy.

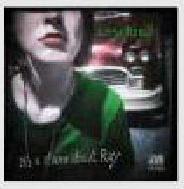
'BUBBLEGRUNGE' COMETH

Lemonheads

★★★★★

It's A Shame About Ray

(ATLANTIC, 1992)



"Well, you'd see the pain if you were reading carefully," says Dando of his early-'90s interviews, and the same can be said of this deceptively complex collection of melodic garage-pop heartbreakers. Gorgeous melodies, plaintive harmonies and seemingly effortless rhymes hide a multitude of uncertainties, sorrows and insecurities.

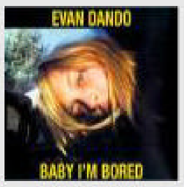
THE MATURE CLASSIC

Evan Dando

★★★★★

Baby I'm Bored

(SETANTA, 2003)



Working with producer-songwriter Jon Brion, longtime fan Ben Lee, Howe Gelb, Codeine drummer Chris Brokaw and Calexico's Joey Burns, Dando made the album of his career so far. Twelve blithe, poignant evaluations of life's highs and lows, softened by darkness, and lit by an eerie twilight optimism. It pointed a way forward… but to where, we're still waiting to find out.

In 2014 you were meant to be working on a new album with Tom Morgan. What happened to that?

We did try. We had two sessions and we were both having fun but there is some sort of block we have now. We did so much good stuff together and now we try and we don't really get anything done. It's always good to see him though. It's always worth trying.

In December 2015 you were inducted into the Boston Music Hall Of Fame. How was that?

It was cool. My family all came up and… I missed most of it. I kind of fucked up and didn't get there until way later. I played the show but I missed this weird syndicated TV thing they wanted me to do. I missed it on purpose. I didn't want to do it. They were really pissed at me but they rubbed me up the wrong way. But I showed up and got the award.

When do you start working on the new record?

Well, I haven't made any demos yet so maybe it's all conjecture. The songs are still swimming around in the miasma. Previously I was doing too much heroin and over-dramatising the whole thing which was making it hard for me to finish stuff, but now I feel almost ready to face the drama of finishing a song. I'm going to go to Vermont with some people from LA, and rent a house. Right now Martha's Vineyard is a little too fraught, too heroiny. I originally moved to Martha's because you can't be a junkie there because everyone knows. Well, now everyone knows. But we'll go up to Vermont. See what happens. Self-discipline is the thing now.

I hear you're writing a memoir. What effect has that had on how you view your past? Has it been therapeutic?

Not yet. It will be, I hope. If it's any kind of book, it will have to have gone through that phase of being therapeutic and pleasurable to do. But I don't think it's there yet. Is there stuff that still needs to be unlocked? Who knows? Maybe. I mean, I've never understood why I've never been able to sleep normally like other people. I'd be walking around my room all night, talking to imaginary fish and stuff. Every night was like a party for me, running around, but it always turns ugly. That's a tough one. Going to people's houses and you don't know what you're going to do when you fall asleep? It sucks.

Where would you say you've been happiest in your life?

The summers I spent in Biarritz, aged nine, 11 and 13. Staying in a château, going to the beach every day, learning to surf, topless women everywhere. It was amazing.

Do you have any regrets, things that you wish you'd done differently?

I don't know. I've always tried to live life by my instincts, by the butterflies in my stomach; whatever makes you feel scared, you should do. I've had good things and bad things happen to me but I've had a really great life, you know? I wanted to have an adventure and I've had adventures. So I'm doing something right, I guess.

Ronnie Spector 1943 - 2022

I CAN HEAR MUSIC

Loved alike by Beatles and Ramones, **RONNIE SPECTOR***'s voice rings through the ages. But the guts she had to survive persecution by her husband Phil is even more extraordinary. Since her death in January, her records and her story speak louder than ever, in defiance of those who would shackle her. "She was a free spirit," discovers* **SYLVIE SIMMONS***.*

THE VOICE, THAT'S WHAT IT WAS ABOUT. A girl's voice, young, unschooled, rough around the edges, that sounded like nobody else. It had power and urgency but there was also that quiver that encompassed the entire range of teenage emotion: longing, lust and love. Ronnie Spector's voice demanded attention. It could cut through everything, Phil Spector's wall of sound included, and tear you inside-out. In the summer of 1963 when The Beach Boys' Brian Wilson, driving with his girlfriend, heard her for the first time on his car radio, he was so overwhelmed he had to pull over. The song was Be My Baby. "My favourite song," Wilson says. "I love her voice so much." Ronnie's recent death, aged 78, "just breaks my heart", he says, too bummed to add any more.

Ronnie wasn't the first of the girl group singers but she was the first we knew by name. And by sight. The Ronettes – Ronnie, her big sister Estelle and cousin Nedra Talley – had the look to go with their sound. The matching tight slinky dresses with a slit cut down the side so they could dance. Those 10-inch high beehives. "The original bad girls of rock'n'roll," Joey Ramone called them.

Veronica Bennett was born in New York City in 1943, her mother Beatrice half Cherokee, half African-American, her father Louis Irish. A big family – six aunts, seven uncles, various cousins and a strict grandmother in a couple of small apartments. The girls weren't allowed to hang out on the streets so they played on the roof. But growing up in Spanish Harlem in the '50s, there was no way to miss all the new music and dances going on below.

The Ronettes: (from left) Ronnie Spector, Estelle Bennett and Nedra Talley in 1967. "The original bad girls of rock'n'roll", according to Joey Ramone.

Pictorial Press Ltd/Alamy

Her first musical love was Frankie Lymon. She was 12 when she heard him on her grandmother's radio singing Why Do Fools Fall In Love (1956) with his group The Teenagers. Lymon was from Harlem too, a year older than Ronnie. That year Ronnie started singing, trying to copy everything about Lymon: his phrasing, his piercing voice. The first concert she went to was Frankie Lymon. (Later, invited by her mother to Ronnie's 13th birthday party, the troubled singer would turn up two weeks late, drunk, and make a pass at her.)

With Estelle and Nedra, Ronnie debuted on-stage at Harlem's illustrious Apollo Theater – Amateur Night. They didn't win, but they weren't disheartened. Anywhere Ronnie could find for them to sing and dance, they sang and danced. In their matching dresses and towering hair, they'd wait in line outside the Peppermint Lounge on West 45th St – the hottest night club in New York City – until one night, mistaken for performers, they were ushered inside and on-stage. "And there was [Starliters singer] Joey Dee," Ronnie recalled. "We started out dancing and then I got hold of a microphone, I couldn't resist."

Through Dee they met rock'n'roll DJ Murray The K. He had a regular night at the Fox Theatre in Brooklyn and gave them the singing-dancing house band job. Ronnie speculated that one of those shows was likely where Phil Spector first set eyes on them, scouting for singers for his Philles label.

The first two singles credited to The Ronettes were released on Colpix in 1962 (following a brace as Ronnie & The Relatives). They flopped. Meanwhile, Spector's Crystals were on fire, scoring a Billboard Number 1 with He's A Rebel that November. The day after calling Spector's office and asking for an audition, The Ronettes were at Mira Sound Studios. Spector, sitting at the piano, told them to sing some songs they knew from the radio. They started with Why Do Fools Fall In Love. "Phil told us to stop," Ronnie recalled. He said, "*That* is the voice I've been looking for."

VOICE, SINGULAR. FROM THE START IT WAS RONNIE, not The Ronettes, who obsessed Spector. He tried to sign her on a solo deal but her mother said it was all three girls or nothing. "About six months later," said Ronnie, "we had a Number 1 record." ➢

For The Ronettes' debut single, Spector had considered a version of The Twist before selecting a song by Brill Building partnership Ellie Greenwich and husband Jeff Barry. Spector gave himself a co-writing credit, because to Spector the record *was* his. His work of art. All the rest – the songwriters, singers and musicians – were the canvas he chose to work on and the colours he chose to paint or erase.

Be My Baby, released in the sultry summer of 1963, was a masterpiece. A symphony of drums, guitars, basses, pianos, strings, percussion, horns and backing singers (including Cher, making her recording debut). And soaring over the top of them, entirely uncowed by the density and volume, was Ronnie Bennett's vocal. The single shot to Number 2 in the US charts (kept off the top by My Boyfriend's Back, by another girl group, New Jersey's The Angels). It remains one of the greatest American pop records of all time.

That same year Phil released a Christmas album, *A Christmas Gift For You From Philles Records* (1963), featuring 13 songs by Philles' artists, three by The Ronettes (Frosty The Snowman; Sleigh Ride; I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus). His seasonal opus took months to make – Ronnie remembers sleeping in the studio as he worked long into the night demanding take after take – but the timing of the release couldn't have been worse: November 22, the day of JFK's assassination. Nearly 60 years later it's hard to imagine a time it won't be considered a classic. Arguably, it also represented Peak Girl Group.

In November '63, Philles released Baby, I Love You, followed in 1964 by (The Best Part Of) Breakin' Up, Do I Love You? and Walking In The Rain. Each was its own ecstatic Spector symphony with Ronnie towering above, but each would peak progressively lower in the charts. An album, *Presenting The Fabulous Ronettes Featuring Veronica*, came in November. It compiled the group's singles to date and a handful of new cuts, including a love song Spector wrote for Ronnie, When I Saw You. Although Spector was married – to Annette Merar, an earlier protégée – he and Ronnie had become intimate. Ronnie's problems had just begun.

The golden age of the American girl groups lost its glow with the arrival of The Beatles and the Stones – boy bands who wrote and played their own songs but were also diehard Ronnie fans. Friends too, or as much as feasible since Spector barely let Ronnie leave his side. When The Ronettes toured the UK in '64, the Stones opening, Spector telegrammed Stones manager Andrew Loog Oldham to instruct him to keep them away from his girls (the edict was ignored by Keith Richards; he claims he and Ronnie fell in love on that tour) then flew to the UK to keep them under closer surveillance.

In 1966 The Ronettes were booked to tour with The Beatles. Spector, insanely jealous, wouldn't let Ronnie go, and replaced her with another cousin. In 1967, their career stymied by the man who'd launched them, the trio broke up. The year after, Spector, divorced since 1966, married Ronnie in Beverly Hills City Hall. He had bought a 23-room mansion in LA for them to live in – the "mausoleum" she would call it, though she looked forward to working closely with her new husband on her solo career. Then Spector told her that he didn't want a wife with a career. She was not allowed even to sing in the house, except The Ronettes' beautiful 1965 flop Born To Be Together, which he insisted she sang to him every night. "I was brainwashed," she told MOJO's Lois Wilson in 2015. "I couldn't see what he was doing to me."

Her life was increasingly restricted. She had a car for a while but had to drive with a life-size inflatable Phil Spector in the passenger seat. After the Manson killings in 1969, what was already a prison became a fortress: floodlights, barbed wire, guard dogs, electrified fences. When Spector went out to work, he locked her in. Unsurprisingly, Ronnie turned to drink, but Spector pulled her out of Alcoholics Anonymous, obsessed that she'd meet a man and leave him. In the mansion basement he installed a glass coffin to remind her what would happen if she did. But after seven years, Ronnie escaped, barefoot, into a getaway car driven by her mother.

In January 2021, when it was announced that Phil Spector had died while serving a sentence of 19 years to life for killing actress Lana Clarkson, Ronnie posted: "Meeting him and falling in love was like a fairy tale. I loved him madly, and gave my heart and soul to him… He was a brilliant producer, but a lousy husband."

After the divorce, Ronnie kept her married name. As with Tina Turner, another artist abused by her partner, it was the name she was known by as a singer. What she wanted to do now more than anything was get back to work.

...presenting the fabulous
RONETTES
featuring VERONICA
A CHRISTMAS GIFT FOR YOU
From Philles Records
Ronnie Spector
And The 'E' Street Band
"Say Goodbye To Hollywood" / "Baby Please Don't Go"

(From top) The Ronettes check out the latest news, London, 1964; a selection of Ronnie gems.

"I WAS 12 WHEN BE MY BABY WENT TO Number 2," Steven Van Zandt tells MOJO. "It was summer '63. Those girl group songs always remind me of summer."

Van Zandt was reminded again 10 years later when Martin Scorsese invited him and Bruce Springsteen, another girl group fanatic, to a screening of his new movie Mean Streets. Be My Baby was the song over the opening credits.

"Groups like The Ronettes were pioneers," says Van Zandt. "It was ironic – and the great injustice of rock history – that those groups, who had influenced the British Invasion, were put out of work by the British Invasion in the prime of their lives. I was very conscious of some sort of gratitude mixed with guilt that these heroes – the reason why we were all playing rock'n'roll – were no longer appreciated."

It wasn't an easy time for the E Street Band, either. Springsteen was trying to change managers, freezing their recording careers, when Steve Popovich – the head of A&R at Epic – came up with an idea. He told Van Zandt, "There's a song Billy Joel has written, Say Goodbye To Hollywood, a tribute to The Ronettes and those Phil Spector records. Why don't we do it with the E Street Band? I'll pay everybody double or triple scale for two songs and that will hold you for a while." Van Zandt wrote the B-side. "And it became," he says, "the first Ronnie Spector And The E Street Band record."

But it took Ronnie a while to get used to being back in the business. "She was very nervous," Van Zandt recalls, "with good reason. We were total strangers. And her confidence had been completely destroyed by Phil. If we hadn't called, you know, that might have been the end."

Getty (2)

“I WAS BRAINWASHED. I COULDN’T SEE WHAT PHIL SPECTOR WAS DOING TO ME.”

Ronnie Spector

Going solo: Ronnie Spector and ever-present ”lousy husband” Phil, Gold Star Studios, Los Angeles, 1968.

Her voice sounded different too. "I had Bruce at the session and I said, Man, something's not quite right. We were trying to analyse it and we finally realised what it was. She had stopped using the famous vibrato the way she used to. So she was sort of reintroducing herself to her old voice."

She was still not quite over her alcohol problems. But 'Southside Johnny' Lyon – whose debut album with the Asbury Jukes Van Zandt was producing – "was in a similar place", says the guitarist. "So we had them both go on the wagon and they toured together for a while. She got back on-stage and stayed there for the next 45 years."

Say Goodbye To Hollywood was released on Epic in 1977. The sleeve shot shows Ronnie Spector surrounded by Springsteen's smiling musicians, and for good reason. After inspiring an important aspect of their sound in the first place, Ronnie Spector had kept the E Street Band from breaking up.

RONNIE AND PHIL DIVORCED IN 1974. IT WAS AN UGLY business – he threatened her with a hitman – and he was still doing his best to kill her career. When Ronnie tried to sing one of her classic songs, he'd send lawyers to stop her. Meanwhile, he refused to cough up her record royalties until she sued him and won.

Meanwhile, she was working on her debut solo album – this time with a female producer.

Genya Ravan and Ronnie Spector had a lot in common. In the early '60s, when Ronnie And The Relatives were regulars at the Peppermint Lounge in NYC, Ravan – AKA Goldie, founder and frontwoman of the girl group Goldie & The Gingerbreads – were at the Lollipop Lounge in Brooklyn. Both groups toured with the Stones in '64, and broke up in '67, but their lead singers had each followed a different path.

Post-Gingerbreads, Ravan released a number of solo records in different incarnations, not always what the major labels wanted. The CBGB's punk scene was more to her taste. She produced the Dead Boys' debut, *Young, Loud And Snotty*, and now she wanted to produce Ronnie Spector. She'd always loved her voice but wanted to hear it on material that was more contemporary. "I needed her to come into the light," says Ravan today.

In her apartment on 57th Street in Manhattan she sang and played some of the songs to Ronnie. "She started to sing along with it and my hair stood up like I had my finger in an electric socket. Hearing that voice in my living room just about stunned the hell out of me."

The musicians Ravan chose to play on it were the downtown punks. "I grabbed Ronnie and took her down to CBGB's. I wanted her to feel what was happening, to put her finger on the pulse of it." Members of the Dead Boys, Johnny Thunders' Heartbreakers and Mink DeVille contributed on various tracks, but it was clear who was the star.

"Ronnie killed it," says Ravan. "She was *fast*; so easy to work with. She was Ronnie. There was her voice. And she was amazing." In her 1990 memoir, Be My Baby, Spector called Ravan "a strong producer who knew what she wanted, just like Phil". *Siren*, a fine album of hard-edged performances, was released in 1980.

Yet Phil continued to interfere. He phoned Ravan and said he wanted to co-produce. "I said no. He could not believe I said no. He sent a car for me, said he was staying in a fancy hotel on the East side. Everybody said, 'Be careful,' but I went over there." Phil harangued her: "'What are you? A singer or a producer?' I just said, Wake up and smell the roses. Today a chick singer can be a producer if she wants to be." Spector continued to call her home and leave weird messages. Ravan changed her phone number.

Rebuilding Ronnie Spector's career was posing more than the usual challenges. People were scared of Phil Spector or didn't want the harassment that could come with giving Ronnie a job. But she always seemed upbeat and warm. And there was some good news. In 1982 she remarried. Jonathan Greenfield remained her husband and manager to the end. And in 1986 she was back in the US Top 5 as the featured singer on the Eddie Money hit Take Me Home Tonight. Getting away with tucking in a snippet of Be My Baby must have added to the satisfaction.

Getty (4), Tom Sheehan

"Tender and intense": Ronnie on-stage at Tuts nightclub, Chicago, April 28, 1981.

WALL OF HEARTACHE

FIVE STELLAR RONNIE SPECTOR PERFORMANCES, BY LOIS WILSON

RONNIE & THE RELATIVES

I WANT A BOY

(Colpix single, 1961)

The Ronettes recorded four singles for Colpix before hooking up with Phil Spector, all typical Brill Building fare, with the pick their debut I Want A Boy, which has Ronnie, then just 16 years of age but with vocal essence already refined, navigating the vagaries of teenage romance.

THE RONETTES
PHILLES RECORDS
BE MY BABY
116

THE RONETTES

BE MY BABY

(Philles single, 1963)

Written by Ellie Greenwich, Jeff Barry and Phil Spector, and featuring Cher's first appearance on record as backing vocalist. The Ronettes' wall of sound debut is pure pop spectacle, from that fabulous kick drum opening to its fade-out ending and Ronnie's street-vocal, both tender and intense, centre-stage.

RONNIE SPECTOR

TRY SOME, BUY SOME

(Apple single, 1971)

Ronnie's cover of George Harrison's *All Things Must Pass* off-cut, recorded in Abbey Road with a crack studio band including Leon Russell. Co-produced by Harrison for an album that never was, it's a rarified beauty and a glimpse into what might have been: Ronnie's voice, both seductive and yearning, set against sweeping orchestra and choir. Majestic.

Ronnie Spector
TRY SOME
BUY SOME
Apple
1832

SOUTHSIDE JOHNNY & THE ASBURY JUKES

YOU MEAN SO MUCH TO ME *(Epic, 1976)*

A footnote in Springsteen lore: he penned the song; Steven Van Zandt produced. But more importantly, this is the moment Ronnie, freed from emotional and literal imprisonment by Phil, regains her full confidence and self-belief, never sounding so gleefully whole as she trades lines with John Lyon over a wall of Jersey Shore soul.

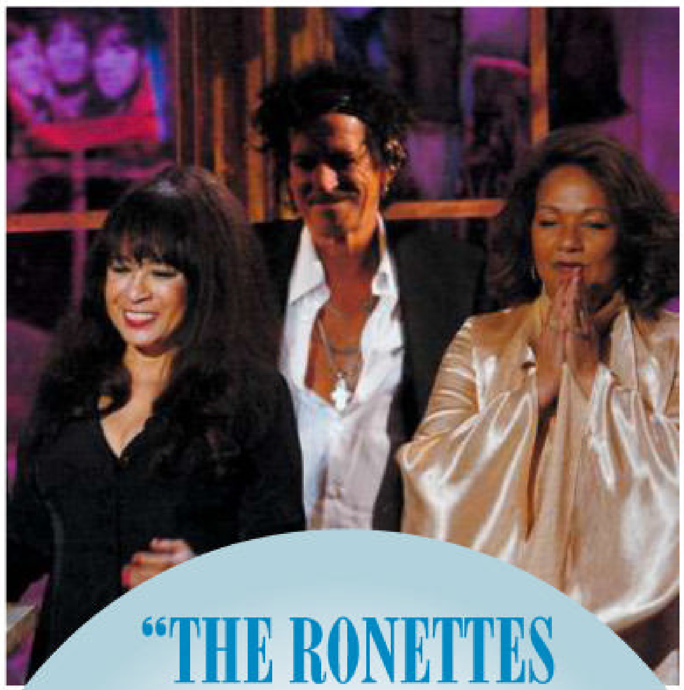
RONNIE SPECTOR

YOU CAN'T PUT YOUR ARMS AROUND A MEMORY

(from She Talks To Rainbows EP, Kill Rock Stars/Creation, 1999)

RONNIE SPECTOR
SHE TALKS TO RAINBOWS

After a decade under the radar, Ronnie returns with fan boy Joey Ramone for an EP of covers including this Johnny Thunders number. Thunders was another huge Ronnie fan and the song, heart-wrenching in his hands, becomes more so in hers: a palpable emotional breakdown followed by an ascent towards redemption.



The sound of the street: (clockwise from left) Ronnie sees red, 1978; with super-fan and collaborator Joey Ramone, 1999; bringing her songs and stories tour to the Queen Elizabeth Hall, London, March 9, 2014; The Ronettes, with Keith Richards, get inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, 2007.

THE END OF THE 20TH century found Ronnie Spector back with the punks. After all, there was a lot that the girl groups and the punk scene shared. Both were based on the sound of the street. The records had an urgency, cut and released quickly on indie labels. And both diversified how a rock'n'roll band should look, empowering many more female musicians and singers. In 1999 Ronnie recorded an EP with Joey Ramone.

Ronnie knew who Joey was; she'd heard the recording he made of Baby, I Love You in 1980. Her husband found a song of Joey's called She Talks To Rainbows, and Ronnie wanted to record it. Phone calls were made and Ronnie met up with Joey and producer Daniel Rey.

So they sat around, listening to songs, choosing which they would cover, and decided on five. Two of them were classic Ronnie – Don't Worry Baby, the song Brian Wilson wrote for her; I Wish I Never Saw The Sunshine, a Greenwich-Barry-Spector song. The other three: Johnny Thunders' You Can't Put Your Arms Around A Memory; and two Joey songs, She Talks To Rainbows and Bye Bye Baby. That last one they sang as a duet. "Joey has this natural sound," she said. "He's like me, he doesn't rehearse things, he just sings." "Ronnie," Joey said, "is just Ronnie. A free spirit."

The EP was released in punk rock/girl-group style on an indie label, Kill Rock Stars. Ronnie would return to the world of punk in 2003 to sing with Jerry Only on the Misfits' album *Project 1950* (2003) – 21st century takes on classic mid-20th century songs. It was manager/producer John Cafiero's suggestion. "I loved the idea and encouraged him," Only tells MOJO, "but it seemed almost beyond the realm of possibility to me at the time. For me, Ronnie was a rock'n'roll crush from back when I was a kid."

> "THE RONETTES WERE PIONEERS. IT WAS THE GREAT INJUSTICE OF ROCK HISTORY THAT THEY WERE PUT OUT OF WORK IN THE PRIME OF THEIR LIVES."
>
> *Steven Van Zandt*

When Cafiero told him that Spector had agreed and confirmed, Only was amazed. "On the day of the session, when Ronnie walked in the door, I couldn't believe it was actually happening. It was like an out-of-body experience, like a dream."

There were two more Ronnie solo albums, each of them – like the concept of *Project 1950* – playing on the idea of bringing the past into the present. *Last Of The Rock Stars* (2006) featured guests including Patti Smith, Joey Ramone and Keith Richards. On *English Heart* (2016) she lent her extraordinary voice to British pop and rock songs from the '60s. And in December 2021, days before her death, The Ronettes were back in the US Top 10: their 1963 recording of Sleigh Ride from *A Christmas Gift For You*.

And in 2007, The Ronettes had finally, belatedly, been inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. Keith Richards climbed onto the podium to give the speech – open shirt, big grin, cigarette between his teeth. He recalled a night in 1964 in a dark, dank little theatre in England when The Ronettes were at their peak and the Stones their opening band. He'd come out of their tiny dressing room and into the corridor and he could hear "these beautiful little chants, Estelle and Nedra, and then that pure voice over the top."

They were singing Be My Baby.

"I got a Command Performance to myself," said Richards. "And I realised that they could sing all the way through the wall of sound. They didn't need anything. They touched my heart right there and then and they touch it still."

Getting in on the… Yard Act: (from left) James Smith, Sam Shipstone, Ryan Needham and Jay Russell, North 17 Studios, Tottenham Hale, December 10, 2021.

An endearing hotchpotch of homespun grooves and mordant Northern wit, YARD ACT are Britain's busiest buzz band. But can they compete in the big leagues while still keeping it DIY? "What we've realised," they tell ANDREW PERRY, "is that we can have it both ways."

Photography by **PHOEBE FOX**

"YOU LEARN A LOT PLAYING TO EMPTY ROOMS," SAYS James Smith, the bespectacled singer of Yard Act. "You learn that you don't want to go back to them."

Smith is reflecting on his Leeds-based group's unlikely transformation into one of 2022's most hotly tipped, with a debut long-player, *The Overload*, that's best described as Arctic Monkeys meet Sleaford Mods – their driving grooves a robust platform for Smith's wry postcards from a Britain mired in disappointments big and small. It's a world-view hard-baked by the 10 years Smith served with noise-rockers Post War Glamour Girls, the appeal of whom might be described as selective. "Although we had a pretty strong following in Wakefield," he deadpans.

2019 was the low-point for Yard Act's two prime movers. That winter, Smith, recently married but at a loose end musically, loaned his spare room to bassist Ryan Needham, erstwhile driving force behind boy-girl noise-poppers Menace Beach, whose run of three 2010s albums for London indie Memphis Industries had also just dried up.

Smith had led Post War Glamour Girls as a blood-and-thunder rock howler through four LPs but found he "couldn't keep up the anger that that band required". That year, he'd started up a straight-down-the-line alt-country band called Cruel World. It could hardly have been further from where he's ended up.

"I was into classic, Glen Campbell-style songwriting, and I almost didn't want my personality in there," he explains, "just this 'blankist' image of the vessel for The Song."

IN YARD ACT, BY CONTRAST, SMITH'S PERSONALITY IS THE MAIN EVENT. Raincoat-clad, he commands the stage with a dry charisma that's drawn favourable comparisons with Jarvis Cocker and Mark E Smith (he's actually from the Fall singer's hated Cheshire). Back then, though, he was struggling to find a voice, one that connected anyway. It was only when his lodger started looping basslines and drum patterns that he discovered ➢

Phoebe Fox

Acting up: (clockwise) Yard Act on-stage at The Stag's Head, east London, November 9, 2021; Smith and his thousand-Yard stare; debut single and LP *The Overload*.

"I QUITE LIKE PEOPLE. I *AM* TRYING TO FIND A BIT OF FUCKING ENLIGHTENMENT AND PURPOSE. WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE?"

James Smith

CT
ARD
A: THE TRAPPER'S PELTS
YARD ACT
THE OVERLOAD

⋖ one, adding vocals to Needham's tracks in a more declamatory, spoken style. "When the music is that bare-bones," he reasons, "you're more connected to the rhythm – not far off rapping."

Smith admits he'd followed Sleaford Mods since the release of 2013's *Austerity Dogs*, drawn to its artwork's echo of Beastie Boys' *Check Your Head*, and there's a clear parallel between the core partnership of Needham and Smith in Yard Act, and in Sleaford Mods, where Andrew Fearn's backing tracks unlocked a creative door for Jason Williamson, who'd likewise been plugging away fruitlessly in guitar bands, including post-Britpoppers Meat Pie.

The first song Smith and Needham came up with was The Trapper's Pelts, in which, against Fall-ishly lumbering backing, Smith satirised today's cut-throat gig economy via a picaresque fable where the narrator buys discounted furs off a trapper, makes a mint selling them down the local market, but ultimately feels "gnawing guilt" as his underpaid supplier is left "shivering, naked and alone".

In early 2020, the duo played their first shows as Yard Act, and dropped The Trapper's Pelts into a set of the "Guided By Voices lo-fi rip-offs" they'd concurrently been hatching, with bonus mates on drums and guitar.

The latter pair quit when Fixer Upper, a prospective B-side for a Trapper's Pelts 7-inch, came back from remixing by Sheffield producer Ross Orton with "this beefy 808 drum machine pounding away under it" – too electronic for them. Smith's lyric told of an upwardly-mobile Everybloke called Graham, who spouts casual xenophobia and ruins his street with needless rebuilding and "poundshop terracotta frogs everywhere", and this unforgettable slice of aural portraiture duly landed on BBC 6 Music – connection made, at last.

Graham, says Smith today, is a composite character, based on "kids from the football team's dads, someone who lived down the street when I was young, an uncle who isn't my favourite uncle, and just people in the pub. (*Pause*) That type of man comes fully formed without being based on one person… and he lives with me now."

Two years on, Smith's observational wit has publishing houses clamouring over a 50,000-word novella he's written, with the trapper as the main character, and cameos from Graham and a vicious pub landlord from *The Overload*'s title track, called Fat Andy.

"I was trying to write a short story for the second 7-inch sleeve," Smith reveals, "to embellish those first four songs, and it just sprawled. Now my agent's saying, 'It doesn't all have to be connected to Yard Act. You can be a writer in your own right.'"

SMITH'S EXPERIENCE OF THE WORLD BEGAN in Lymm, a leafy riverside village on the outskirts of Warrington. His dad worked in a supermarket, his mum as a child-minder, and they lived "on a council estate at the far end of town".

He had a drum kit in his teens, but had more aspirations towards animation, which is why the debut album by Damon Albarn's Gorillaz was his listening epiphany – "hip-hop, punk, funk, folk, Latin music and dub reggae all being drip-fed to me through cartoon monkeys".

At college age, he moved to Leeds to do a music production degree, where he met the other members of Post War Glamour Girls. Rather like Dublin and Melbourne, two cities which have bred successful indie scenes in recent years, Leeds has its own self-sufficient DIY culture, largely oblivious to mainstream acceptance. DIY certainly describes the duo recordings Smith and Needham made during the pandemic's first lockdown as they pinged music and vocals back and forth ("It was the polar opposite of writing in other bands I've been in," says Needham, "a lot faster and freer"). And once lockdown lifted in summer 2020 they shifted into higher gear,

Jamie Macmillan, Phoebe Fox, Camera Press, Avalon (2)

Close encounters: (clockwise from left) James Smith fronts Post War Glamour Girls, with bassist Alice Scott, at Castle Hotel, Manchester, November 14, 2013; Yard Act fix up Brighton's Chalk, November 6, 2021; Menace Beach, with Ryan Needham (left), at Leeds Met, May 6, 2014.

Smith clocking off as a one-to-one carer for a teenager with special needs and spending the evening at the print studio where Needham worked, voicing tracks in the back room.

The bulk of *The Overload* is based around those self-recordings, with producer Ali Chant fleshing them out first at his Bristol studio in January 2021 ("It was work, technically," grins Smith), then finishing off up in Leeds with Sam Shipstone, a refugee from recently demised psych-rockers Hookworms, on guitar, and Smith himself providing 'real' drums where required.

On first listen, it's the record's withering character pieces that stand out, evoking not only Alex Turner in early Arctic Monkeys, but vintage Ray Davies circa The Kinks' 1979 recessionary romp, *Low Budget*. Second track Dead Horse is, Smith admits, "the Brexit song, about the rose-tinted-glasses view of Ye Olde England", which in the process memorably imagines "knobheads morris-dancing to Sham 69".

"I feel a bit snide about that now," he says, "because Sham had trouble with the National Front taking over their band… (*smirks unrepentantly*) It's a throwaway gag."

The LP's concluding numbers, however, shift towards a more reflective mood.

"By track nine," Smith explains, "you've hit the peak of how long you can listen to me sniping and playing the snarky finger-pointer. I knew that for the album to outlast this moment we're in as a country, it needed an ending that opens doors for Yard Act's future, and says more about me than I've given away so far."

Consequently, Tall Poppies starts off lampooning a post-millennial reincarnation of The Kinks' David Watts – "those guys who peak early and have their prime in high school" – but Smith ends up turning the microscope on himself. "I started to wonder where their lives had gone. I felt so far away from that world and that part of my life. I took my wife Lynsey back to see where I'd grown up, and all the houses on our street had been gentrified. I began to appreciate how much that place had shaped me, and how lucky I was to grow up there, as it was."

Album closer 100% Endurance provides an emotional, spirits-lifting finale, very similar to Stay Positive on The Streets' *Original Pirate Material* – another Yard Act touchstone. "Overall, I'm an optimist," Smith concludes, blushing slightly, "and I quite like people. I *am* trying to find a bit of fucking enlightenment and purpose. What are we doing here? What is the meaning of life? I like chasing those questions."

AT LONDON'S LEXINGTON VENUE recently, MOJO watched the all-new four-piece Yard Act come into their own. On the mike, Smith, hyperactive and magnetic, quipped that they were "not just Steve Lamacq" – namechecking BBC radio's perennial alt-music champion but suggesting, hopefully perhaps, that their destiny lies outside the UK's indie ghetto. With new drummer Jay Russell adding propulsive power to Needham's basslines, and Shipstone doodling on top like James Brown's Jimmy Nolen, they were instantly connective. Robust and undeniable on-stage; spontaneous and playful on record – still a DIY bedroom construct: Yard Act are two bands for the price of one.

"What we've realised," Smith beams, "is that we can have it both ways. Me and Ryan get a kick out of writing and recording at home. I'm not sat on my arse in a practice room for three hours while the band are jamming."

On Album No. 2, they plan to experiment further, maybe try recording with Jay's dad, thrash-metal producer Russ Russell (signature clients: Napalm Death). Says Smith, "We're thinking Beastie Boys: some raw live tracks, some tracks editing and looping the band, some tracks based on me and Ryan at home."

Having brought positive energy into his own career, Yard Act's portraitist extraordinaire looks forward to revisiting his Fixer Upper character. "Maybe Graham's hip niece came back from art college at Christmas with some new opinions," Smith speculates, "and he'll take them on board?"

As Yard Act's story so far seems to suggest, stranger things have happened.

GARDEN VARIETY

Four albums that inspire Yard Act, as told to **Andrew Perry**.

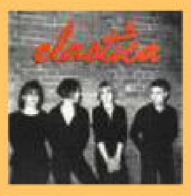
THE SPECIALS
More Specials

(2 Tone, 1980)

James Smith: "The Specials are a really important band to me. The debut is incredible, but I return to *More Specials*, uh, *more*. It's political without being on-the-nose, it's funny without telling you it's doing a joke, and it's sonically eclectic without ever sounding disjointed."

ELASTICA
Elastica

(Deceptive, 1995)



Ryan Needham: "I always go back to this album as a reminder of how important leaving space in songs is. Also, the basslines are all amazing and the songs are all incredible. The Incident [off Yard Act's *The Overload*] is my best Annie Holland impression."

BLUR
Think Tank

(Parlophone, 2003)

Jay Russell: "I love this album for a lot of reasons, I've always admired the way it's arranged, produced and mixed. I think without Coxon on this record, they had more space to play with. The result is something pretty different to anything they'd done before. You can hear where Albarn's head was at the time, given where he went with Gorillaz."

EDDY CURRENT SUPPRESSION RING
Primary Colours

(Aargh!, 2008)

Sam Shipstone: "The pumped garage-rock guitars were a spiritual influence for me on this record: trying to get jacked up while recording into a laptop because of lockdowns. Which Way To Go gave me confidence that a rich G chord can keep your attention, so I used it to oblivion on our track Tall Poppies."

IT HURTS ME TOO

KAREN DALTON was the real thing: a dust-bowl folk singer who astonished her ’60s peers until drugs and an allergy to the bright lights threw her music into shadow. Only now, as a bumper reissue of her key *In My Own Time* album hoves into view, is her voice – and those of her devotees – being properly heard. “She could do the magic,” they tell **VICTORIA SEGAL**.

“SANTANA! SANTANA!”

It’s May 1971 and Karen Dalton is playing the biggest venues of her career, opening for Santana across Europe as they scale their commercial peak. Organised by Woodstock promoter Michael Lang, who has signed Dalton to his new record label, Just Sunshine, for her second album, *In My Own Time*, the tour is a disastrous mismatch. Having started out passing the basket in Greenwich Village coffeehouses alongside Bob Dylan and Fred Neil, Dalton prefers long, hazy living-room jams. On the big stage, her tarnished-silver voice cannot cut through the impatient chants of audiences expecting a different kind of Black Magic Woman.

“Her performance style was very introspective,” recalls guitarist Dan Hankin, who played on both her albums and in her make-or-break touring band. “She was more of a person who said, ‘Here’s what I have, take it or leave it.’ In a coffeehouse, maybe that would work, you know? But in a huge concert hall filled with young people who had no idea who Karen Dalton was? I don’t think they had any idea of what to make of it.”

This is Dalton’s second chance at success after her 1969 Capitol debut, *It’s So Hard To Tell Who’s Going To Love You The Best*, but it’s already slipping away.

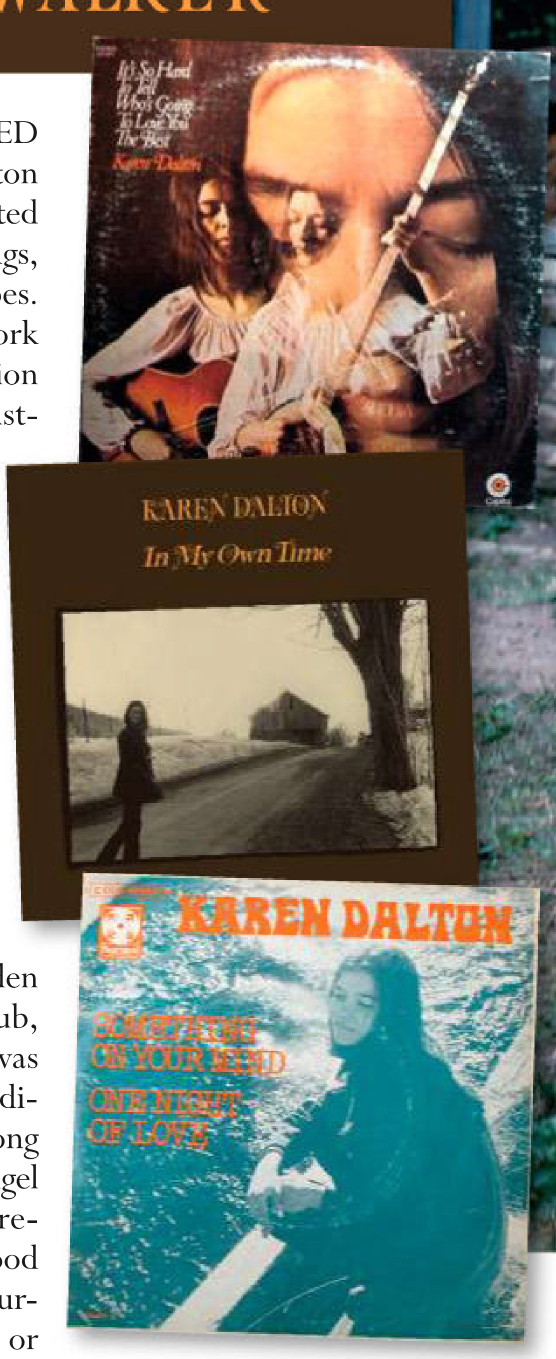
What to make of Karen Dalton was not just an issue for Santana fans. When she died of AIDS in 1993, at the age of 55, she had not made a record for over 20 years, declining into obscurity, poverty and addiction. Yet in the early ’60s when she first hit Greenwich Village’s booming folk scene, she was acclaimed by her peers. “Karen was like a letter from home,” Fred Neil wrote in 1969, finding both solace and inspiration in her voice, while in 2004’s Chronicles, Bob Dylan recalled being struck by the “funky, lanky and sultry” Dalton, her “voice like Billie Holiday” and her guitar playing “like Jimmy Reed”.

Towards the end of Dalton’s life, her friend, the cosmic folk guitarist Peter Walker, used to reassure her she would be famous one day. “Yeah, Peter,” she would reply in her still-detectable Oklahoma drawl. “That famous won’t do me any good because I won’t be here to enjoy it.” As she said in one of the songs nobody ever thought she wrote: “Fate sneaks up from behind/Pretty soon it’s too late.” ➢

Carl Baron/Courtesy of the Estate of Karen Dalton

So long ago and far away: Karen Dalton in her mountain cabin, Summerville, Colorado, 1966.

> "KAREN COULD SING A SONG AND MAKE OTHER PEOPLE FEEL AS THOUGH THEY'RE PART OF THE SONG." PETER WALKER



A PART-CHEROKEE, PART-IRISH SINGER WHO PLAYED an unusually tall banjo carved from a bedpost, Karen Dalton lent herself to myth. When her music started to gain belated attention in the mid '90s, it was assumed she had written no songs, given no interviews, left little in the way of photographs or tapes. She was, after all, supposed to have died alone on the New York streets, a tough place to maintain an archive. Yet as her reputation has grown, it's become harder to see Dalton as an ethereal dust-bowl heroine flitting through the frames of her life. 2007's *Cotton Eyed Joe* captured a performance at Joe Loop's Boulder coffeehouse The Attic in 1962, while 2008's *Green Rocky Road* caught her playing at home on a reel-to-reel in her Colorado mining cabin (we even hear a brief conversation with her mother, Evelyn: "Did your folks let you dance?" Karen asks). Later, it transpired Karen had left a cache of her own songs and poems in the care of Walker; he allowed a handful to be recorded as 2015's *Remembering Mountains: Unheard Songs By Karen Dalton*, Sharon Van Etten and Julia Holter among the artists lifting them off the page.

Light In The Attic, meanwhile, are about to release an expanded 50th Anniversary version of *In My Own Time*, featuring previously unreleased audio from the 1971 Montreux Golden Rose Pop Festival and audio from German TV show Beat Club, which she played during the calamitous European tour. It was unearthed by filmmakers Robert Yapkowitz and Richard Peete, directors of the documentary Karen Dalton: In My Own Time, along with holy-grail tapes from a radio interview with DJ Bob Fass. Angel Olsen, meanwhile, read passages from Dalton's diaries that reframed her not as a tragic cipher but a wise, rueful, flesh-and-blood woman who wearily understood the world. "She had little resurgences over the years," says Yapkowitz. "Reissues will come out, or there'll be an article here and there, but she kind of always fades back into the shadows. So a big part of what we wanted to do was create something that could permanently cement her legacy."

Even with such a solid document behind her, a sense of precariousness remains. A few months after the filmmakers visited Walker, a fire at his house destroyed Dalton's entire archive. If they hadn't been there to photograph it… "it would be gone forever," says Peete. "It would not exist in any form."

BORN IN TEXAS IN 1937, THEN RAISED IN ENID, Oklahoma, Jean Karen Cariker was steeped in folk music from the cradle. Her mother Evelyn was a nurse; her father John a welder. Dalton married for the first time aged 15 ("to some handsome young guy," says her third husband, fellow folk singer Richard Tucker) and had a son, Lee; at 17, she married a literature professor called Don Dalton and had her daughter, Abralyn. There are photographs of her in the documentary, red-lipped, insouciant, upswept, Rizzo from Grease with two babies on her lap. "One thing that cracked me up in that movie was the pictures of her as a young woman with bouffant hair and everything," says Tucker. "She was married twice and then just decided she was going to change that. It didn't work for her. I don't think she ever got a haircut again."

"I want to accept responsibility for my life," Dalton wrote in her diaries. "I'm working on my own direction and destiny, not my mother's."

She arrived in New York on the cusp of the '60s, viewed as an "authentic" voice by more middle-class contemporaries. "We were learning arrangements off Odetta records," remembers Walker. "Odetta was the absolute genuine real McCoy and so was Karen."

As the decade moved on and it became more common for musicians to write their own material, Dalton took pride in her interpretative gift. "She said to me once: 'People say I'm a singer. That's not what I am – I'm a song stylist,'" says Walker. "She would be rehearsing in her mind – songs, lyrics, phrasing, making love to a song in her imagination. If Karen was doing a song, you could bet she would have put in a minimum of 100 hours on how to sing it."

Tucker, a former army trumpeter, met her in an apartment above the Bleecker Street Cinema and was soon playing in a trio with her and Tim Hardin, moving in circles that included beat poet Bob Kaufman, Richie Havens and Dino Valenti. At times, she was living with her daughter Abralyn, whom she "kidnapped" back from her former husband, the little girl accompanying her everywhere she went. Yet life in New York was tough: "poor and starving", she and Tucker decided to head for Boulder, Colorado, where Loop's coffeehouse was becoming the nexus of a new folk scene. "Use the time to create a new mythology," Dalton wrote astutely before the flight. "Grab your possibilities and make them realities."

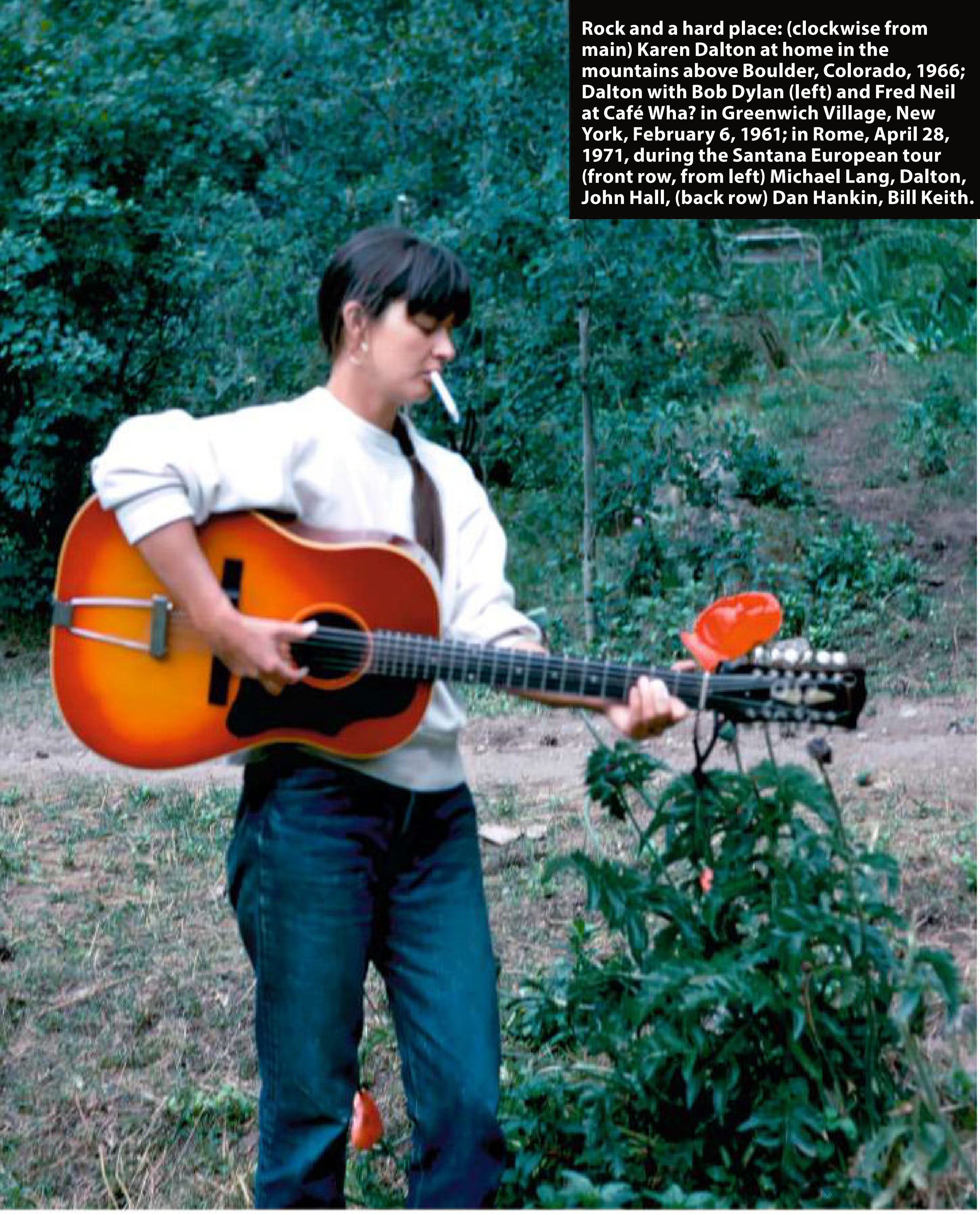
A beatnik ahead of the curve, Dalton now became a proto-hippy, living in old mining cabins in the mountains. "We were kind of dropouts," says Boulder resident Hankin. "We used to stay in the mountains as much as possible and we would make trips to town for essentials, to go shopping or to get a shower."

Tucker describes them as "horse hippies": "We had a hitching post in our front yard. I spent a couple of years riding that one horse, Mamacita, all over the mountains bareback on acid and stuff."

He recalls going to buy their horses at a market in town, Dalton's Oklahoma roots kicking in as she pointed out the best animal from across the meadow: "It was something about the straightness of their legs."

Hankin says Dalton was "seen as a leader" in the musical community, a scene orientated around living-room gatherings. "She was kind of a central focus. So a lot of the musicians, like me, would come around to play with her."

Carl Baron/© Greenwich Entertainment



Rock and a hard place: (clockwise from main) Karen Dalton at home in the mountains above Boulder, Colorado, 1966; Dalton with Bob Dylan (left) and Fred Neil at Café Wha? in Greenwich Village, New York, February 6, 1961; in Rome, April 28, 1971, during the Santana European tour (front row, from left) Michael Lang, Dalton, John Hall, (back row) Dan Hankin, Bill Keith.

© Christian Rose/Fastimage

Hardin was a frequent visitor, too, as extreme a personality as Dalton – although, at this stage, displaying a more obvious commitment to drugs. "When he left my house I was never sure if I'd see him again," Dalton wrote in her diaries. "He's such a terrible driver. He had an accident about once a week."

It was, remembers Tucker, a happy time, but even then, Dalton could display worrying signs.

"When she would drink she would change and sometimes that could be a kind of a very negative space that she could get into," says Hankin. Once, driving down off the mountain into Boulder, Dalton started telling him about when she and her friends "back home" would zoom drunkenly along country roads, knocking mailboxes off their posts with a baseball bat. She started to demonstrate, swerving all over the road just to terrify Hankin: "There was nothing I could do."

After an argument over leaving a party one night, Hankin woke up to find his car wouldn't start. "I kind of knew that she had done something. When I opened the hood, I saw that the distributor cap was torn out, you know? She tossed it into the woods. I somehow had to replace it. You could sometimes sense that you just don't cross her."

LONG-STANDING LEGEND HAD IT DALTON NEEDED to be tricked into recording her first album, lured down from the Boulder mountains like a shy animal with a saucer of milk, the tapes left running secretly. The recordings of her radio interview with Fass blow that myth apart, however. "I get thrilled by people who make their own records," she says in her rich, clipped speaking voice. "I think that's a great thing to do… I dig it. We were offered some free time at this little studio downtown, Blue Rock. I really liked it, especially for playing live, which we were doing."

While it's true that Fred Neil advocated for Dalton, asking her to audition for Capitol producer Nick Venet, she was not unwilling. Hankin agrees. "It seemed to me it was totally voluntary on Karen's part and I wasn't aware of any kind of subterfuge."

The recording set-up was simple – Dalton, Hankin, bassist Harvey Brooks, with drummer Gary Chester added later, a Colorado-like set-up designed to play to Dalton's strengths. "It was essentially just the three of us face to face," says Hankin. The album showcased her repertoire, veering between blues, traditional folk and songs by her Café Wha? cohort, including Neil's Blues On The Ceiling and Hardin's How Did The Feeling Feel To You?.

A scattering of good reviews didn't lead to impressive sales, but a second chance came when Lang turned his attention onto Dalton. "She could do the magic," says Walker. "The magic thing was to sing a song and make other people feel as though they're part of the song; take people outside of themselves for three or four or minutes and bring them back. Michael had the vision to see that; he spent $80,000 making that album, a lot of money, bringing in the best musicians he knew from around the country and bringing Harvey Brooks in as producer. It just reeked of quality."

Brooks, who had played on *Highway 61 Revisited* and *Bitches Brew*, felt Lang saw him as "somebody who could deal with excessive personalities" – by this time, Dalton's drug and alcohol problems were escalating.

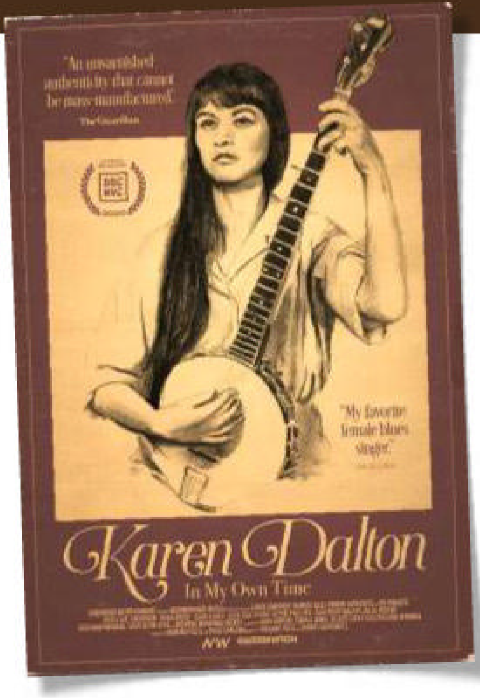
"And it was not, you know, a weekend party," Brooks says. "It was life. My job was to get her to get the best performance possible. She stood up and I put her in with some really good people. We had a great time making it but I had to stay on it, you know, I had to keep her away from all the bad stuff that was readily available."

It was too late in the day for a pure folk album. "The idea also was that Karen would come out with a folk rock, more poppy album," says Brooks. "With her voice sounding the way it is, it made it something that would stand out. Problem was she couldn't promote it."

The versions of traditional lament Katie Cruel, chilled by Bobby Notkoff's violin, and Valenti's poignant Something On Your ➢

Reason to believe: (clockwise from left) Karen Dalton in Europe, 1971; performing at the Montreux Golden Rose Pop Festival, May 1, 1971; Tim Hardin enjoying some Boulder hospitality, with Dalton (right) and Susie Bergman.

“PEOPLE WONDER HOW THEY’RE GOING TO DIE SOME DAY; AT LEAST I KNOW.” KAREN DALTON


"An unvarnished authenticity that cannot be mass-manufactured" The Guardian
"My favorite female blues singer."
Karen Dalton
In My Own Time

≺ Mind are Dalton at her peak, yet both Walker and Hankin suspect she was less than comfortable with the record. You can sense it when the chorus of male voices break in on How Sweet It Is, or when she sings When A Man Loves A Woman, hauntingly rendered but out of step with her old repertoire. Footage shot for German TV shows Dalton at a microphone, no guitar or banjo in her hand, not quite passing as one of the new breed of singer-songwriters.

“Karen was able to do it consistently but was too fragile to exploit,” says Walker. “She would do it every time she performed but she was just too physically fragile to tour and to go to wherever the big money exists.”

THERE’S A POIGNANT NOTE ON THE ORIGINAL PRESS release for *In My Own Time*: “Her next album will include several [songs] she’s written herself.”

There was no next album. Yet in among her archive lay Mistakes Thus Far, a poem – or song – in which Dalton lists ways to self-sabotage. “Too much confidence… Let yourself get distracted… Thinking anyone cares about you/Thinking that your youth will last forever/Thinking you will succeed in that effort.”

By the early ’70s, Dalton could be forgiven for thinking that effort was exhausted. She hung out with The Holy Modal Rounders, escalated her drug use, and relied on social security and the refuge of a rent-controlled apartment in the Bronx. Walker, a paralegal for a taxi fleet at the time, offers insights into her precarious ’80s lifestyle…

“I remember one time she came to me and her hands were all black and blue,” he says. “She’d been arrested for passing out flyers on the street for some restaurant. The police put her in handcuffs that were much too tight. She wanted to sue the city of New York but I had to tell her it was very difficult to sue them because they have great lawyers.”

The idea that she “died on the streets of New York in abject poverty” gained traction in the early days of her posthumous rehabilitation. Instead, says Walker, the last years of her life were almost comfortable. She had been loaned “a rather nice home with a heated swimming pool” near Woodstock. “She was very physically fragile, but nevertheless she was still seeking out wood for her own wood stove, which is no mean feat.” (After she died, says Walker, “because she had AIDS, they filled in the pool as though it was never there.”)

She then moved to a trailer at the end of the house’s drive where her son, Lee, would visit regularly. “At the end she did have an excellent quality of life but she was very distressed that her very large circle of friends had abandoned her,” says Walker. “She said: ‘It’s not my fault – people think that it’s my fault and they blame me and stay away from me.’ That was tough on her. She cried that day. Everybody was afraid. It was terrible to see that.

“On a positive note, she would say, ‘People wonder how they’re going to die some day; at least I know.’”

© Dan Hankin, © Christian Rose/Fastimage, © Greenwch Entertainment

"Pretty soon it's too late": (clockwise from above) Dalton performing It Hurts Me Too from *It's So Hard To Tell Who's Going To Love You The Best*; friend Peter Walker; husband Richard Tucker.

Walker never forgot Dalton's kindness to him when he was at a low ebb in the '60s: "She was one of the most lovely people I ever met," he says, invoking her "Sweet Mother KD" nickname. He went to battle for her in her final days, when social services believed she was incapable of independent living. "She was allowed to stay in her own home and that's all she wanted." He pauses. "I'm not sure. She may have chosen the time of her death. The night before, I hugged her, and she seemed to have a fever and I think – I'm just theorising – that maybe she decided that all of this has gone far enough and it was time for her to leave. She might have taken a few extra pills that night or something. Or not. I don't know."

He remembers going to meet her at her trailer the next morning, ready for another social services assessment. "She was in her bed and I didn't want to disturb her so I sat and watched The Price Is Right and then I went to wake her and I found out that she was gone. I think she was done with it. That was my feeling. She was incredibly fragile. It was like visiting a patient at a nursing home who didn't have that much time left in terms of hours. Her time had come and I think she knew it."

DALTON'S TIME HAS COME IN OTHER, better ways since, as new generations of listeners and artists (Nick Cave, Angel Olsen, Adele) are drawn in by her ability to press a world of sorrow and grief into her voice.

Those who knew her 55 years ago – Dalton's whole lifetime away – can't quite believe her current place in the world. Tucker notes the increase in his twice-yearly royalties for his song Are You Leaving For The Country, covered by Dalton on *In My Own Time*. The other day, when he showed his local record shop staff his photograph on the sleeve of *Cotton Eyed Joe*, they excitedly let him have his CDs for free.

Peter Walker sees even more tangible proof of her legacy. "This morning I sent out cheques for her two children," he says proudly. "We finally collected some back royalties and cut the cheques out to the kids and I feel her spirit saying, 'Good job Peter, keep it up.' I'm delighted that I'm able to facilitate that help for them. At the moment, if she's up there, she's smiling."

In the opening shot of Karen Dalton: In My Own Time, her face slowly swims into view. Nearly 30 years after her death, Dalton is coming into focus, her story – and her music – still full of revelation. As she told Walker, fame has come too late for her to enjoy. Yet for all the poverty, all the grind, she seemed to intuit that success wasn't always about those who burned brightest – there was a richer, darker game to win. "All that shines is not truth," she wrote in one of her unsung songs. "Real beauty rarely glitters, so I find."

Karen Dalton's In My Own Time 50th Anniversary Super Deluxe Edition is available on March 25 at www.lightintheattic.net. The Standard Edition is available now.

Alamy, © Greenwich Entertainment/courtesy Everett Collection (2), courtesy Light In The Attic Records

DIAMONDS & DUST

Six songs that summon the magic of Karen Dalton, by **VICTORIA SEGAL.**

KAREN DALTON
COTTON EYED JOE
THE LOOP TAPES
LIVE IN BOULDER 1962

IT HURTS ME TOO

(from Cotton Eyed Joe: Live In Boulder 1962, Megaphone, 2007)

Recorded at Joe Loop's Boulder coffeehouse The Attic, this live set captures Dalton's complete self-possession in front of a rapt audience. Her former husband Richard Tucker once described her as playing "the slowest blues I ever heard in my life": on this gorgeously languid interpretation of Tampa Red's standard, she betrays no temptation to speed things up.

Karen
Dalton
Green
Rocky
Road
The Loop Tapes
Pine Street recordings

NOTTINGHAM TOWN

(from Green Rocky Road, Megaphone, 2008)

Those closest to her describe Dalton as being happiest when playing in a living room, no audience, no demands except her own. This version of the absurdist folk song was taped in her Colorado miner's cabin in 1963, letting you come close to sitting with her while she closes her eyes, picks up her banjo and does exactly what she wants. Ancient enough to sound like she found it behind a chimney, there's also an enveloping drone-like quality hinting at newer paths.

BLUES ON THE CEILING

(It's So Hard To Tell Who's Going To Love You The Best, Capitol, 1969)

"She did Blues On The Ceiling (which is my song) with so much feeling that if she told me she had written it herself, I would have believed her," wrote Fred Neil in the high-praise sleevenotes to Dalton's 1969 debut. It's a devastating combination of singer and song, delivered with a resignation that allows no room for hope or doubt. When she sings, "I'll never get out of these blues alive," it feels like documentary.

KATIE CRUEL

(In My Own Time, Paramount, 1971)

In his online question-and-answer session The Red Hand Files, Nick Cave picked Dalton's uncanny version of this American Revolution-era lament about a fallen woman as one of his top 10 "hiding songs", along with Leonard Cohen's Avalanche and Big Star's Holocaust. The story of a "roving jewel" now dulled, it traces a woman's dangerous path through the world, a ghostly yearning catching Dalton's own restless life: "If I was where I would be/Then I'd be where I am not."

SOMETHING ON YOUR MIND

(In My Own Time, Paramount, 1971)

There's not a whisper of space between singer and song on this beautiful rendition of Dino Valenti's elegiac testament to lost time, fading youth and disappearing opportunity, a note-to-self that features the devastating line, "Didn't you see, you can't make it without ever even trying?" Dalton's horn-like voice merges perfectly with Harvey Brooks's autumnal arrangement, expertly hitting *In My Own Time*'s daring target of alloying her otherworldly mettle with a more modern pop sound.

ARE YOU LEAVING FOR THE COUNTRY

(In My Own Time, Paramount, 1971)

In Karen Dalton: In Her Own Time, Richard Tucker says he last saw Dalton when he jumped out of their car during a row in Denver. He tells MOJO, however, that he might have seen her once more in New York, when he played her his newly written song. It was at least partially inspired by their move to Colorado ("Leave the iron cloud behind/And feel the circus moving on"), but at her sweetest, Dalton pushes it beyond their shared past to hint at a more universal back-to-the-garden quest.

MOJO EYEWITNESS

TEARS FOR FEARS BUILD *SONGS FROM THE BIG CHAIR*

Ex-powerpop misfits from Bath, CURT SMITH and ROLAND ORZABAL found themselves as hit-making faces in early-'80s synth pop. After '83 debut *The Hurting*, 1985 saw their obsession with primal scream therapy meet new drivetime sensibilities and dominate the US charts. But things had grown too big too fast. "With success came the shit we didn't like," recall the band and associates. "The dream became to become forgotten..."

Interviews: MARTIN ASTON • Portrait by TOM SHEEHAN

Roland Orzabal: Our first band Graduate [formed in Bath in 1978] was an adolescent attempt to be fashionable, playing Mod powerpop. We loved 2 Tone and The Jam, but my songwriting hadn't developed enough. Adjacent to this was the inspiration for the name Tears For Fears, namely Arthur Janov, a Californian psychologist famous for primal scream theory, which John Lennon did for six months.

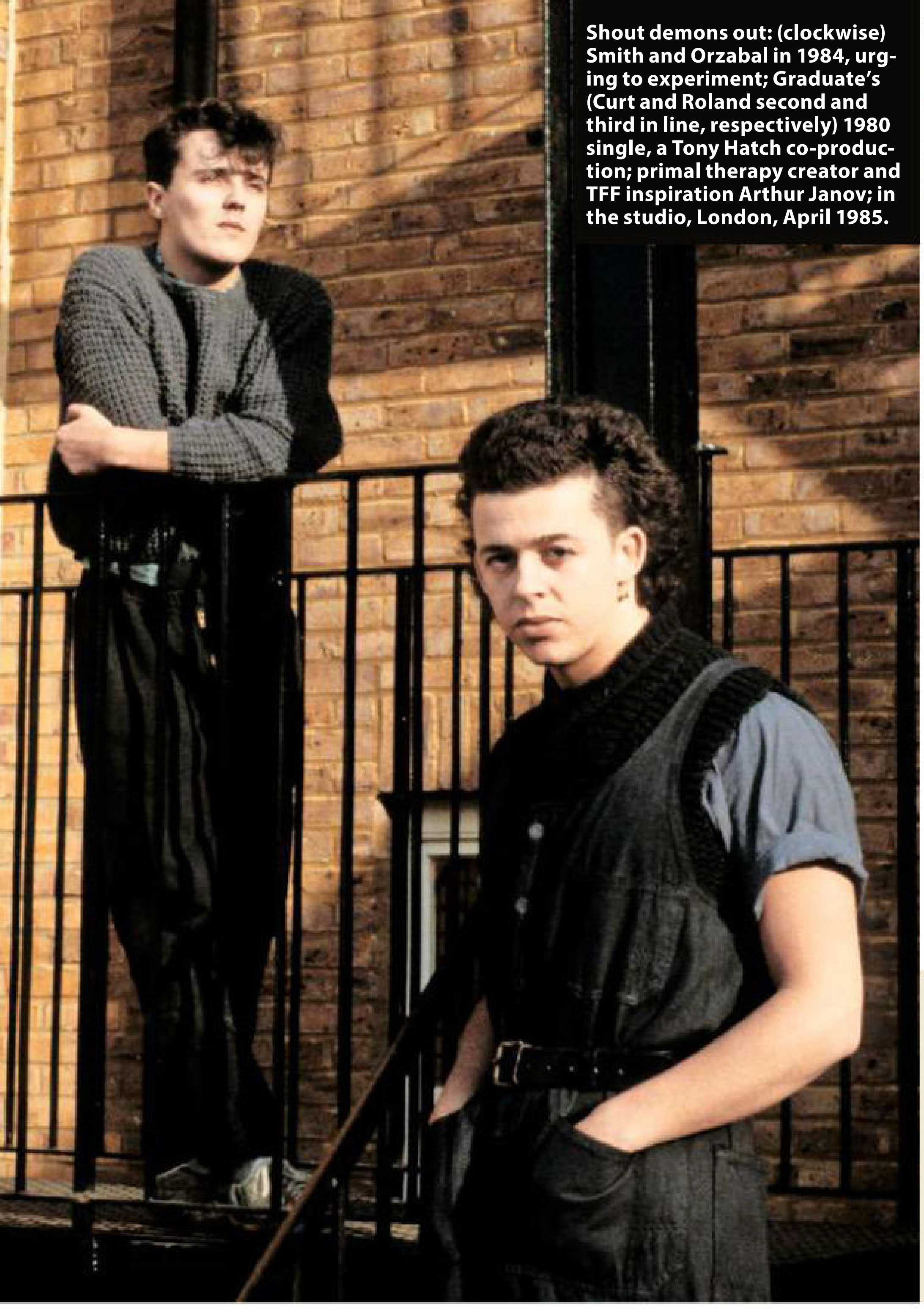
Curt Smith: Roland and I both came from broken homes, raised by our mothers. The rest of Graduate didn't share our inner demons, and the idea of writing with the depth we were now talking about was alien to them.

RO: There was a massive shift in pop: Gary Numan was Number 1, that was literally a Copernican inversion. [In 1981] we met Ian Stanley who owned a synthesizer and a home studio, which he allowed us to use. All of a sudden, we were singing lyrics inspired by Janov and putting acoustic guitar arrangements onto synthesizer and drum machine.

David Bates: I'd signed Def Leppard but I ➢

Hurts so good: Tears For Fears' Roland Orzabal (left) and Curt Smith, March 1983.

Tom Sheehan



Elvis should play ska
GRADUATE
Julie Julie

Shout demons out: (clockwise) Smith and Orzabal in 1984, urging to experiment; Graduate's (Curt and Roland second and third in line, respectively) 1980 single, a Tony Hatch co-production; primal therapy creator and TFF inspiration Arthur Janov; in the studio, London, April 1985.

> "THEY WERE GOING TO GIVE ME £40,000 IN A BRIEFCASE TO PERSUADE ME."
> **Neil Taylor**

could see synth bands would become the sound for the '80s. I particularly liked Tears For Fears' demos, so I signed them for a three-singles deal. The first two, Suffer The Children and Pale Shelter, didn't happen, though Peel and the NME championed them with comparisons to Joy Division. I paired them with Chris Hughes, who'd produced [Liverpudlian synthesists] Dalek I Love You, and Mad World became the next A-side. I figured it would be their breakthrough hit [it reached Number 3 in November 1982]. I'd picked up the option for an album by then, thankfully.

RO: Instead of chasing the tail of pop, we were right in the middle, alongside The Human League, Depeche Mode and Eurythmics.

DB: Of course, media support completely ebbed away once they had hits.

Chris Hughes: People would take the piss out of them. They had a song, Ideas As Opiates, which a journalist re-christened 'Synths As Doorbells'.

CS: It's a peculiarly British thing, because in America, they celebrate success. It pissed me off but in the long run, who cares? The biggest battle is leaving a studio with an album that you love.

RO: [Debut] *The Hurting* was a Number 1 album [in March 1983]. The record company urged us to keep following up singles to maintain a presence in the marketplace – it was saturated even then. Concurrent to that was our urge to experiment, so the next single was The Way You Are [December '83], a strange industrial record and our worst chart success since we started having hits. The single after, Mothers Talk [August '84], was in a similar vein.

CH: They'd tried other producers, which hadn't worked out, so I returned [work on the album began at The Wool Hall, Beckington, in 1984]. Roland didn't feel Mothers Talk had been nailed, so I said, "Let's have guitars!" I think he was simultaneously shocked and thrilled.

RO: That was the beginning of what became *Songs From The Big Chair*. Away from sensitivity, toward a more global outlook.

CS: Chris was the biggest influence on us because he opened our eyes to music we would otherwise not have heard or discovered ourselves, from Steely Dan to Springsteen to Robert Wyatt.

CH: You're not expecting them to rip off things, it's just encouraging good songwriters to write good songs, like when Stewart Copeland played Sting a lot of reggae, and he came up with Roxanne. Dave also wanted the next album to make more sense in America, sales-wise.

DB: Depeche Mode and other British bands had had college underground hits, but to break into the mainstream, you needed a drivetime hit, a three-minute song which people can nod their head or bang the wheel to as they drive to and from work. Drivetime shows got the biggest audiences.

CH: Both Shout and Everybody Wants To Rule The World hadn't been written yet – the big hope was Head Over Heels, and I told them they needed more songs. Roland had played Ian the kernel of a song, which was, "Shout, shout, let it all out…" Wow, stop everything, let's record this. Ian helped write the verse, and the track got bigger and longer, a big, epic onslaught.

RO: We added a Big Country guitar solo, which took us to another level.

CH: After Shout, which took months to finish, Everybody Wants To Rule The World was a breath of fresh air. It took about a week to write and record.

Dave Bascombe: Shout's guitar solo had an ironic, tongue-in-cheek twinge, and the solo at the end of Everybody Wants To Rule The World was equally the obvious way to go. But only Chris thought that song wasn't a bit throwaway; the original lyric was Everybody Wants To Go To War, a definitive Roland statement.

RO: To me, Everybody Wants To Rule The World sounded like really throwaway pop, probably as close to Graduate as we'd dare go. But Dave kept going on about "drivetime radio".

DB: The head of radio promo in the US wanted to release Shout first, and I said it should be Everybody Wants To Rule The World. After a huge row, he relented, but said, "I'm telling you, Shout's the bigger hit," and he was right. Both reached Number 1 in the US [in April and June 1985: both were UK Top 5 hits], but Shout stayed there longer and sold more. *Songs From The Big Chair* ended up selling millions.

CS: The title came from a movie, Sybil [a 1976 US TV film starring Sally Field], specifically the line "I want to sit with you in your big chair", which was the place [in her therapist's office] she felt safe.

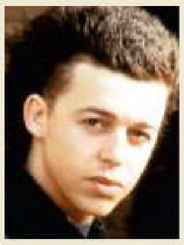
Will Gregory: I'd played saxophone on the album and joined the tour that followed [a world tour began in March '85 and ended in November]. On the American motorways, the signs, rather than "Junction 18 closed – diversion", were flashing up "Tears For Fears!" and their songs were all across the FM dial. We felt this incredible, intoxicating whoosh. Walking out to the sound of 20,000 people shrieking, it's a lift you never forget.

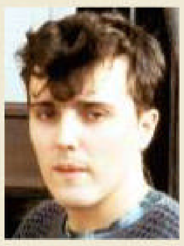
Getty (7), courtesy David Bates, courtesy Echo Beach Management, Alamy

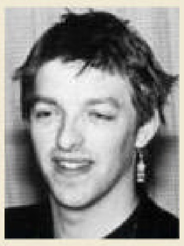
Tears For Fears
side 1
suffer the children
(R.Orzabal & C.Smith)
produced by David Lord
℗ 1981
Phonogram Records
MKM Music
45rpm

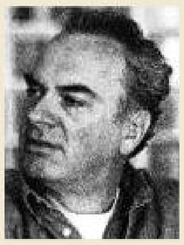
Tears For Fears
mad world
TEARS FOR FEARS
SHOUT
TEARS FOR FEARS
Songs From The Big Chair

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

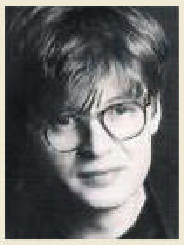

- **Roland Orzabal (vocals, guitar)**

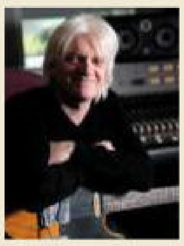

- **Curt Smith (vocals, guitar)**


- **Chris Hughes (producer)**


- **David Bates (Phonogram label A&R)**

- **Dave Bascombe (studio engineer)**


- **Will Gregory (saxophonist)**


- **Neil Taylor (guitarist)**

Carry on screaming: on-stage at the Montreux Golden Rose Rock and Pop Festival, May 11, 1985 (from left) Curt Smith, Manny Elias, Roland Orzabal; (insets from top left) debut 45 Suffer The Children; breakthrough single Mad World; the Shout 45; million-seller *Songs From The Big Chair.*

DBasc: I was in the studio with them in LA, and MTV was on, and we'd be there alongside Duran and others. It was the second British invasion.

Neil Taylor: I'd played the guitar solo on Everybody Wants To Rule The World and [Big Chair track] Broken but I couldn't do the tour because of my solo deal. They asked again halfway through, as the guitarist wasn't working out, and Curt told me – maybe he was joking, but I think not – they were going to give me £40,000 in a briefcase to persuade me, but eventually decided against it. Those massive US hits had clearly earned a lot of money.

RO: I wasn't thinking about the money. I didn't mind success but I saw myself as a man of the people, in inverted commas, no better than the guy queuing for tickets. All I wanted to do was primal therapy, to sort out what the hell was going on inside me.

WG: I don't recall talk of primal therapy on the tourbus. There'd been a falling out with Janov after the band met him, when it was suggested they might write [a musical] together, and Roland pulled the shutters down.

CS: Nothing beats leaving a studio being really happy about what you've made, but success doesn't add to that. With success came the shit we didn't like: the endless work hours, getting up at 7am for drivetime radio interviews, playing every night, being exhausted and away from home.

DBasc: A lot of songs had to be played to backing tracks, which meant they couldn't break out of the arrangement, not even speed up or slow down. Anyone would find it frustrating and boring, night after night.

WG: [TFF manager] Paul King had this V-shaped lighting rig assembled, which lowered up and down. Roland immediately blew it out. But we had to use it for one gig, and the rig came down and down and ended up landing on the keyboards and playing these chords – daaanngg! – and nobody could raise it again, so the gig had to be abandoned. It was a fantastic Spinal Tap moment.

DB: I think they toured …*Big Chair* for two years, all over. The likes of Dylan, it's their life, but for two young guys from Bath it was a lot to take on. Was I responsible? Partly, yes. The record company has a huge worldwide hit, then the boss says, "What's next?" The machine needs feeding. But the bit Roland and Curt liked was making records. With all the royalties, Roland converted the top floor of his house into a studio and now you can indulge yourself in any way you want.

RO: My dream became to blend back into the landscape and become forgotten. And that's why [1989's third LP] *The Seeds Of Love* took many years.

DBasc: After the tour, they really wanted to do something different. But it didn't work out with the new producers [Clive Langer and Alan Winstanley], so Chris and I returned again. But Chris didn't last that long, so they finished the album with me. Roland wanted to work with top session guys, not machines, and Ian Stanley, Roland's writing partner on …*Big Chair*, wasn't that, so he left too.

WG: Roland wasn't confident about his singing and stage presence, and he hoped Curt would front things, but as Roland's confidence grew, he wanted to come further forward, which realigned the dynamic.

CH: People think Curt didn't do much but he was around, willing to help. He had an intuitive sense of what worked and was good at setting Roland at ease. But eventually Curt left because of his lack of interest in being in the studio day after day when Roland was following his own mind. They just lost their connection.

NT: Curt told me he couldn't face coming back for a while, and also said he was nervous about going into the studio. I think Roland wanted to keep control of things, and Curt wanted to sing and write more.

RO: We'd been together around 10 years. The Beatles were roughly the same age as we were, when everything fell apart, 27 or 28 – in astrology, it's called the Saturn Return [they re-formed in 2000].

CS: Then much later, you reach that age… on our last tour in 2019, we played Lorde's version [of Everybody Wants To Rule The World] before going on-stage and then broke into ours, and you see the audience reaction. We're talking about three guitar notes played in a certain rhythm that can change the mood of 20,000 people. Therein lies the power of music.

Tears For Fears' new album The Tipping Point is released on February 25. They tour the UK in July 2022.

THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE

CHAOTIC, INTENSE AND DISBANDED AT THE HEIGHT OF THEIR POWERS BY THEIR FREAKED-OUT MAINMAN, **NEUTRAL MILK HOTEL**'S CULT STATUS WAS INSTANTLY ASSURED. NOW A NEW BOOK ABOUT THE BAND AND THEIR ECCENTRIC ELEPHANT 6 ALLIES DIGS DEEPER INTO THE MYSTERY. "THERE WERE MOMENTS OF REAL BEAUTY, AND THERE WERE MOMENTS OF REAL DESPAIR," DISCOVERS ITS AUTHOR, **ADAM CLAIR.**

PHOTOGRAPH: **CHRIS BILHEIMER**

BY THE END OF 1998, NEUTRAL MILK HOTEL was among the most promising indie bands in the world. They had performed nearly 100 times that year, across the United States and 10 other countries. Tickets sold well, and those who stuck around long enough – they were not an especially punctual band and often took the stage hours after their listed set time – eventually turned what they saw into a legend: a singular band at its peak, a transcendent, you-just-had-to-be-there, too-bad-you-weren't performance. Many report having been moved to tears. A&R reps from major record labels took notice, too, and had begun sniffing around.

Led by Jeff Mangum (guitar, voice) and comprising Jeremy Barnes (drums), Scott Spillane (guitar, brass) and Julian Koster (accordion, saw, etc), plus supporting members including Laura Carter and Robbie Cucchiaro, the band were touring in support of an album, *In The Aeroplane Over The Sea*, they had released that February. Today, it's hailed by music website Pitchfork as the fourth-best record of the 1990s, beating *Nevermind* and *The Bends*. Its title track alone has been streamed more than 80 million times on Spotify, and the physical LP remains a top seller every month in record stores around the globe.

Neutral Milk Hotel seemed poised for whatever next step Jeff Mangum wished to pursue, though no one really expected or understood what he did next. After a New Year's Eve 1998 show at the 40 Watt Club in Athens, Georgia, attended mostly by friends,

Mangum hit the eject button. He stopped releasing new music or doing interviews. He never said why he was stopping, or even *that* he was stopping, not even to his own bandmates. This radical act of negation has become one of the most baffling mysteries in music history. After all, who wouldn't want to be a rock star?

FROM THE BEGINNING OF MANGUM'S HIATUS, rumours abounded about his reasons for stepping away, usually some version of "he went nuts" because of *In The Aeroplane Over The Sea* or the quasi-religious fandom that grew around it. Yet those who know him best say it means a lot to him that the record is so meaningful to so many. Not that he isn't a little shy.

"I see that he's really touched when people come to talk to him and stuff like that," longtime friend and collaborator Robert Schneider says. "Like if I'm with him and a person comes up to him and talks to him, he'll draw them a little picture or something like that. He's so kind. And then afterwards, he looks all like, *That was nice*. But if it's three people, suddenly it feels like a barrage, and he's looking for the exit."

Mangum and Schneider have been friends since they were seven years old, crossing paths in second grade in a Ruston, Louisiana school for the children of professors at Louisiana Tech University. In the early '90s, along with a few of their friends, they co-founded Elephant 6, a collective of ambitious, idealistic weirdos with an unfashionable obsession with psychedelic pop, out of which launched Mangum's Neutral Milk Hotel and Schneider's Apples In Stereo ➢

◄ as well as the Olivia Tremor Control, Of Montreal, The Minders, Elf Power, and dozens more incarnations.

Schneider also produced *In The Aeroplane Over The Sea*, and wrote and played a few parts. He says it wasn't really possible for the response to the record to be the thing that alienated Mangum, since Mangum didn't seem to realise what was happening until after he'd been away for a while.

"I think it was something he noticed parallel to what was going on in his life," Schneider says, "but I think that by the time he noticed that it was a big deal, it was already far enough from the time he had been professionally in bands.

"But I don't think 'professionally' is the right word to add to Elephant 6," he reflects, "because we're so unprofessional."

In fact, the collective's pronounced lack of music industry professionalism was an active, sustained choice to reject it. Evolving in their own bubble in out-of-the-way Ruston and subsequently establishing footholds in Athens and Denver, its artists have made almost all of their records in their homes rather than recording studios. Throughout their careers, they avoided the most basic parts of promotion – even band photos are hard to come by – and though several acts received approaches from major labels, all of them rebuffed that interest (and the payday that would have come with it) and clung instead to their creative principles: DIY or die.

But even among this anti-commercial crew, Jeff Mangum leaned more outré. His first real band was a middle school trio called Maggott, which featured Mangum and future Olivia Tremor Control singer-guitarist Will Cullen Hart on fewer-than-six-stringed guitars plugged directly into a boombox, plus their friend Ty Storms shouting absurdist lyrics over the squall. Mangum played drums in many early bands, too, standing up behind a simple kit like Moe Tucker, playing with clothes hangers instead of mallets or drumsticks.

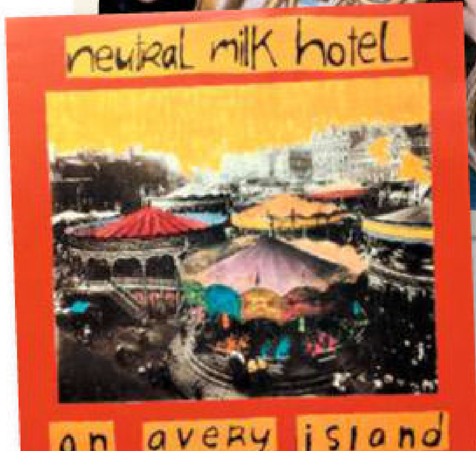
After high school, performing as Clay Bears, Mangum attempted to play a drone piece at a bar in Monroe, Louisiana. The venue cut them off after 10 minutes.

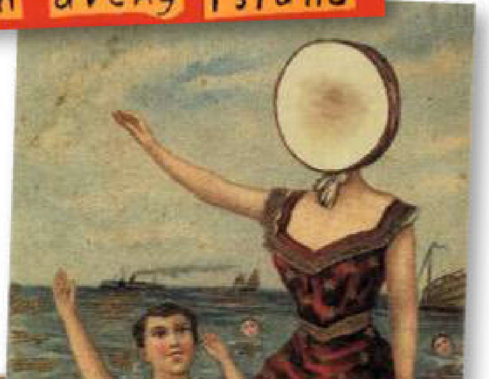
"But it's just one note," Jeff pleaded.

"Well," the bar owner replied, "it wasn't a very good one."

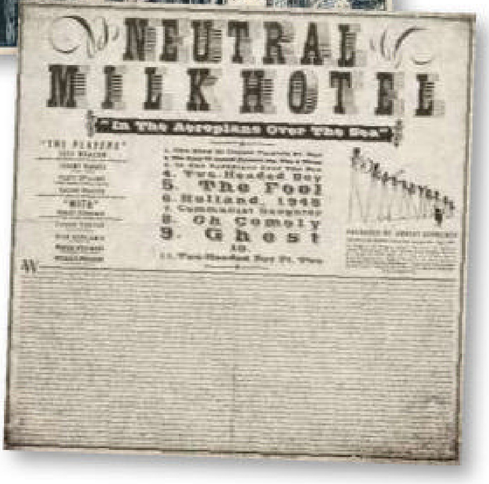
NOISE HAS ALWAYS BEEN A THEME WITH Mangum. In 2011, long after slamming the brakes on Neutral Milk Hotel, he played as the Soap Scums with a few other Elephant 6 alumni at AUX Fest in Athens. The set consisted almost entirely of guitar feedback and the performers eating toast. His playlists during a 2002 stint as a DJ on radio station WFMU included free jazz, *musique concrète*, spoken word, antique folk and religious music, and any number of other pieces not so easily classifiable. He released a medley of field recordings from a Bulgarian folk festival in 2001, and he was working on a tape-collage project under the name Korena Pang around the same time. That record was never finished, but those who have heard it describe it as very different from anything Neutral Milk Hotel released.

"I think Jeff felt straitjacketed into being this song guy, and so he pushed back," says the Elephant 6-adjacent Dave McDonnell, who played with Jeremy Barnes in Bablicon. "It was like he was daring people: 'Try and still like me now that I have this weird interest.' Korena Pang was this absolute masterpiece of him pushing all the buttons. We all thought it was a work of genius."





NEUTRAL
MILK HOTEL



Plane sailing: (clockwise from top) Neutral Milk Hotel "actively choosing to reject professionalism" (from left) Barnes, Mangum, Koster and Spillane; Jeff gets in the Christmas spirit at home in Athens, Georgia, 2001; 1998 single Holland, 1945; a group hug; Mangum's inspiration, Anne Frank's Diary; blowing off some steam in San Francisco, 1998; debut LP *On Avery Island* (1996) and *In The Aeroplane Over The Sea* (1998).

Chris Bilheimer (2), Lance Bangs, Chris Buck

Despite his aesthetic eccentricities, Mangum found an audience with Neutral Milk Hotel. *Aeroplane* sold modestly well from the start, and reviews noted its uniqueness. In Spin, Erik Himmelsbach described it as sounding as if Mangum had "concocted the whole thing alone in his car, in the middle of nowhere, his connection to the outside world limited to faraway oldies, Paul Harvey, and a bunch of old-time religion on AM radio."

Those who saw the band perform in the '90s were just as baffled but similarly impressed.

"I don't think I've ever experienced a crowd that was so swept by one person," Andy Battaglia, a friend and early audience member, says. "You could feel an eyelash fall to the ground in the whole place. Everyone was sort of slack-jawed. To hear Jeff sing live is quite something."

"Once, in Norway, Jeff played a show right before having a massive emergency root canal at two in the morning," says Jeremy Barnes. "I don't think anyone in the audience was aware of the pain he was in, and it didn't affect his voice.

Holland, 1945
ANNE FRANK:
The Diary of a Young Girl
AN EXTRAORDINARY DOCUMENT OF ADOLESCENCE
INTRODUCTION BY ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

"IT ALWAYS FELT MIRACULOUS THAT **NO ONE WAS EVER HURT,** I ALWAYS FELT LIKE IT WAS GOING TO END WITH **SOMEONE GETTING RUN THROUGH WITH A CYMBAL STAND."** JULIAN KOSTER

I feel bad that we all took Jeff's super-solid, incredible consistency of vocal performance for granted."

The performances were rarely tight but often memorable. Sets would be cut short when, say, a guitar was thrown into an amp or a whole person hurled himself into a drum kit. Others started late because the van had broken down or the band had stopped to play Wiffle ball on the way. The actual shows were just as shambolic.

"I loved Neutral Milk Hotel, but it always sounded like shit," Elephant 6 collaborator Derek Almstead says. "The balances were always weird. I think they were a very difficult band to mix. It was visceral, but it was never this fully realised, awesome-sounding thing… That was part of the magic, that it was ramshackle and amateurish. Some nights it would sound awesome, but mostly it would be kind of chaotic."

The band, for their part, leaned into the chaos. "It always felt miraculous that no one was ever hurt, because someone ought to have been," says Julian Koster. "I always felt like it was going to end with someone getting run through with a cymbal stand, like one of those French swords. Because there was no concept of anything when that was happening. It was very joyful."

JEFF MANGUM'S FIRST RELEASE AS NEUTRAL MILK Hotel was 1994 single Everything Is, on Seattle indie Cher Doll Records. Ever itinerant, he'd landed in the Northwest after dropping out of Louisiana Tech and drifting through Athens, Denver and LA, and would later describe the release as a "godsend because I was pretty much at the end of my rope with just about everything in my life at that point."

The song attracted the attention of Merge's Laura Ballance and Mac McCaughan, and the first Neutral Milk Hotel album, *On Avery Island*, followed in March 1996, recorded by Mangum and Schneider on lo-fi 4-track in Denver home studios. After its release, Mangum assembled a band to tour it, recruiting Julian Koster, whom he'd met in Athens not long before. Koster pulled in teenage drummer Jeremy Barnes, who had once opened for Koster's Chocolate USA in Albuquerque and was now languishing in Chicago. Mangum rounded out the quartet with Scott Spillane, who was making pizzas for drunk college kids in Austin.

The extended band descended on Robert Schneider's Pet Sounds studio in Denver in July 1997. Each of the new members transformed Neutral Milk Hotel's sound. Koster's quirky instrumentation defamiliarised otherwise straightforward folk songs, most obviously with his ethereal singing saw. Spillane's loose-but-never-sloppy horns fit nicely with the handmade aesthetic, adding depth and humanity. With collaborators handling duties he'd previously fulfilled himself – namely percussion, which Barnes had taken over assertively – Mangum had more time to immerse himself in the composition of what became *In The Aeroplane Over The Sea*.

"When I wrote [*Aeroplane*], I finally had a room of my own to work in at all hours of the day with the door shut," Mangum told Alternative Press in 1998. "I'd sit there listening to short-wave radio and my records – Captain Beefheart, this French composer Pierre Henry, Bulgarian music, Hungarian gypsy music. The stability let me go deeper into my head and let the subconscious take over. There's such an obsessive nature to these new songs – a few of them really freaked me out. It took my housemates to say, 'That's not too strange.'"

Before recording *On Avery Island*, Mangum had decided he should learn more about history, though he wasn't sure whether it would help him understand the world more clearly or less. At a used-book store in Athens, he had picked up a copy of The Diary Of A Young Girl by Anne Frank. He spent two days reading it and three days crying. The experience would find its way into *Aeroplane*, which features numerous references to Frank's life and the Holocaust, including a song titled Holland, 1945.

"While I was reading the book, she was completely alive to ➢

≺ me,” Mangum told Puncture in 1998. “I pretty much knew what was going to happen. But that’s the thing: you love people because you know their story. You have sympathy for people even when they do stupid things because you know where they’re coming from, you understand where they’re at in their head.”

Music is typically understood as the segregation of signal from noise, but beneath that simple heuristic lies a subjective process. Who decides which is which? *Aeroplane* takes the position that even polar opposites – signal and noise, transcendent beauty and devastating ugliness, life and death – can coexist harmoniously. *Aeroplane* loops the contradictory acts of looking inward and boundlessly outward into a continuous, synthesised whole.

“Some of the songs really scared me when I first wrote them,” Mangum told Magnet in 1998. “They were so intense I wasn’t sure I even wanted them on the album until I got to Denver. I let my subconscious take over… It was a real struggle to try to include the more beautiful aspects of life. I find being here to be a very beautiful thing, and I wanted as much beauty as possible to come across.”

WHILE MANY OF THE SHOWS ON THAT FINAL NMH tour sold out, none of the venues fit more than 700 or so people. Many held far fewer. But once Mangum withdrew, something strange happened. People who had seen or even just heard them spread the gospel, without the help of Facebook or Spotify or commercial radio stations or MTV or really any other means that can’t be described as someone telling someone else to check it out. The rest of the band had moved on to other projects, and Mangum remained largely out of public view.

The explosion in *Aeroplane*’s popularity became tangible when Mangum toured again as a solo act from 2011 to 2013, followed by a full NMH reunion from 2013 to 2015. He didn’t play any new material, didn’t participate in any promotion, and permitted no recording of any kind: no photos, no videos, no audio bootlegs. The classic Neutral Milk Hotel line-up – Mangum, Barnes, Koster, Spillane – and a rotating cast of supporting musicians played more than 160 shows in 20 months (following more than 100 in the preceding 20 months on the solo tour). The full-band schedule was as gruelling as it had been in 1998 – 25 different countries and 41 US states (plus DC) – but the accommodations were cushier and the crowds were much, much bigger. This time, Neutral Milk Hotel were headlining major festivals and selling out huge theatres in minutes.

“Whole different son of a bitch,” says Laura Carter. “Suddenly 3,000, 6,000, all the way up to Coachella, which was 80,000. The bigger the show, the lonelier the experience. The crowd becomes a *thing*, with more separation and barriers between the band and the audience.”

Going into the reunion tour, Mangum knew that the majority of the crowds would be people who had never had the chance to see the band perform, and those people had high expectations.

“I think there was immense pressure,” says Scott Spillane. “Imagine going to sleep one night and you’re playing a bar that has a laundromat in the back, and then you wake up and you’re scheduled to play Coachella. That’s a lot of heat.”

Mangum felt the heat before the tour began. The band practised constantly. He took vocal cord training to make sure he could sing each night with his trademark intensity. Alcohol was not permitted backstage, lest a hangover derail the next night’s show. Rolling around in the grass was forbidden, to avoid Lyme disease.

“At the beginning of the tour, Jeff took me aside and told me that I couldn’t throw him into the drum set any more,” says Koster. “It was funny, because I’m pretty sure it was *he* who always threw *me* into the drum set.”

To the audience, the restrained performances felt like listening to *Aeroplane* more than they felt like seeing the band perform live in its ’90s heyday.

“It was very, very composed,” says Cucchiaro. “The lines were very clean. It had that kind of fidelity and tidiness. The ’97 shows were obviously sloppier, but in a holy way. There was some sort of spiritual wildness.”

HELLO JUMBO

SIX KEY ALBUMS FROM THE ELEPHANT 6 STABLE/CIRCUS, CHOSEN BY **STEVIE CHICK**

◆

OLIVIA TREMOR CONTROL

MUSIC FROM THE UNREALIZED FILM SCRIPT: DUSK AT CUBIST CASTLE

(Flydaddy, 1996)

Assembled from years of 4-track experiments, Olivia Tremor Control’s debut had 27 tracks of acid-damaged pop accompanied by a bonus album of “instrumental themes and dream sequences”. The approximation of 1967-era psych-pop excess was eerily accurate; the songcraft crackled with inspiration.

THE APPLES in stereo
TONE SOUL EVOLUTION

THE APPLES IN STEREO

TONE SOUL EVOLUTION

(SpinART, 1997)

E6’s most succinct melodists, the second album by Robert Schneider’s The Apples In Stereo boasted an embarrassment of charismatic tuneage. Seemingly taking The Beatles’ Got To Get You Into My Life as his sonic compass, Schneider’s double-tracked vocals and unabashedly ‘pop’ hooks were bolstered by Byrdsian jangle and Stax-y horns.

NEUTRAL MILK HOTEL

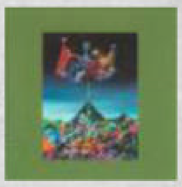
IN THE AEROPLANE OVER THE SEA *(Merge, 1998)*

A chaotic, magical-realist folk rock opera inspired by The Diary Of Anne Frank and scored by distorted guitars, singing saw and ecstatic, drunken trumpets, Jeff Mangum’s finest moment is also the Elephant 6 movement’s peak. Delivered with maverick zeal, its themes of love, death, tragedy and unlikely redemption still resonate.

CIRCULATORY SYSTEM

CIRCULATORY SYSTEM

(Cloud Recordings, 2001)



Formed from the ashes of Olivia Tremor Control – indeed, numbering all members of that group, minus founder Bill Doss – Circulatory System pushed OTC’s psychedelic experiments even further out-there, its baroque instrumentation, playful production effects and questing songwriting evoking late Zombies, *Smile*-era Beach Boys and Syd-era Floyd.

JEFF MANGUM

LIVE AT JITTERY JOE’S

(Orange Twin, 2001)

Highlights of this bootleg-quality recording of an intimate solo Mangum gig – taped by filmmaker Lance Bangs at an Athens coffee shop in 1997 – include a joyful strum through rarity Engine, a beguiling cover of Barry Mann’s I Love How You Love Me and a breathtaking first-ever public performance of Oh Comely.

OF MONTREAL

HISSING FAUNA, ARE YOU THE DESTROYER?

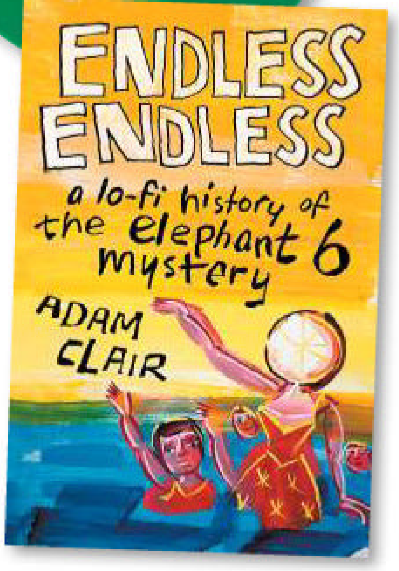
(Polyvinyl, 2007)

Kevin Barnes’s Of Montreal broke orbit from the ’60s with this eclectic, Bowie-esque concept album focused on Barnes’s identity crises. *Hissing Fauna…* switched genre at will, peaking with the happy/sad synth-pop genius of Heimdalsgate Like A Promethean Curse.

of Montreal
Hissing Fauna, Are You The Destroyer?

> “I THINK JEFF FELT **STRAIT-JACKETED INTO BEING THIS SONG GUY,** AND SO HE PUSHED BACK. IT WAS LIKE **HE WAS DARING PEOPLE: ‘TRY AND STILL LIKE ME NOW.’”**
> DAVE McCONNELL

SIDE TWO
THE APPLES



Milking it: (clockwise from top) Jeff records the sea during a trip to New Zealand, 2001; Of Montreal’s Kevin Barnes has a flutter, Chicago, 2012; Mangum and Barnes performing at Shaky Knees Music Festival, Atlanta, May 9, 2015; The Apples’ 1993 Tidal Wave EP, with the Elephant 6 logo; Endless Endless by Adam Clair; umbrellas out – The Apples In Stereo, 2000.

Getty (3)

SINCE THE NEUTRAL MILK HOTEL reunion tour wrapped in 2015, Jeff Mangum has returned to a life of seclusion, and it’s unclear whether that will ever change. Had he remained on the rock-star road, his collaborators would have happily taken the ride with him, but they begrudge him nothing for flooring it down the off-ramp instead.

“The odd thing is that it worked out in the best way possible,” says Barnes. “Julian put out many Music Tapes records. Scott has a wonderful wife, he has a daughter, he became a carpenter. Jeff met [his wife] Astra, and he has found a sense of peace that he didn’t have back in those days, when he would wake up yelling or fall into a depression in the middle of rehearsal. I met my wife, Heather, and my adventures as a musician are still going [as A Hawk And A Hacksaw]. I think we all, knowingly or unknowingly, had a hand in the band ending. But from the moment I joined to the end, I was completely devoted to it.”

In the collective’s peak years, from the beginning of 1995 to the end of 1999, the Olivia Tremor Control made *Music From The Unrealized Film Script: Dusk At Cubist Castle* and *Black Foliage: Animation Music Volume 1*. Robert Schneider’s The Apples In Stereo released four albums, and Elf Power and Of Montreal three apiece. At least 15 other acts associated with the collective released albums – some not so much finished products as they are documents of creative indulgence, dispatches from the distant reaches of messing around.

“To a person, everyone in the Elephant 6 has a heart of gold, but everyone was also dealing with their own trauma, their own flaws, and serious struggles with poverty and all the issues that go along with that,” says Barnes. “There were moments of real beauty, and there were moments of real despair. It’s really strange how predators and vultures appear when you are at your lowest. The salvation, in the end, was in creativity and magical thinking.”

Far from being a well-oiled machine, the collective operated like an improvised Rube Goldberg apparatus made from chicken wire, old luggage, and fifth-hand furniture, but the fragility is entirely the point. It sounds as if it could come apart at any time, rickety and ramshackle by design, such that it can exist at only a human scale. The life-affirming joy that comes through on *In The Aeroplane Over The Sea* and other Elephant 6 records is a reminder that regardless of audience size, music has value for the people who make it, too.

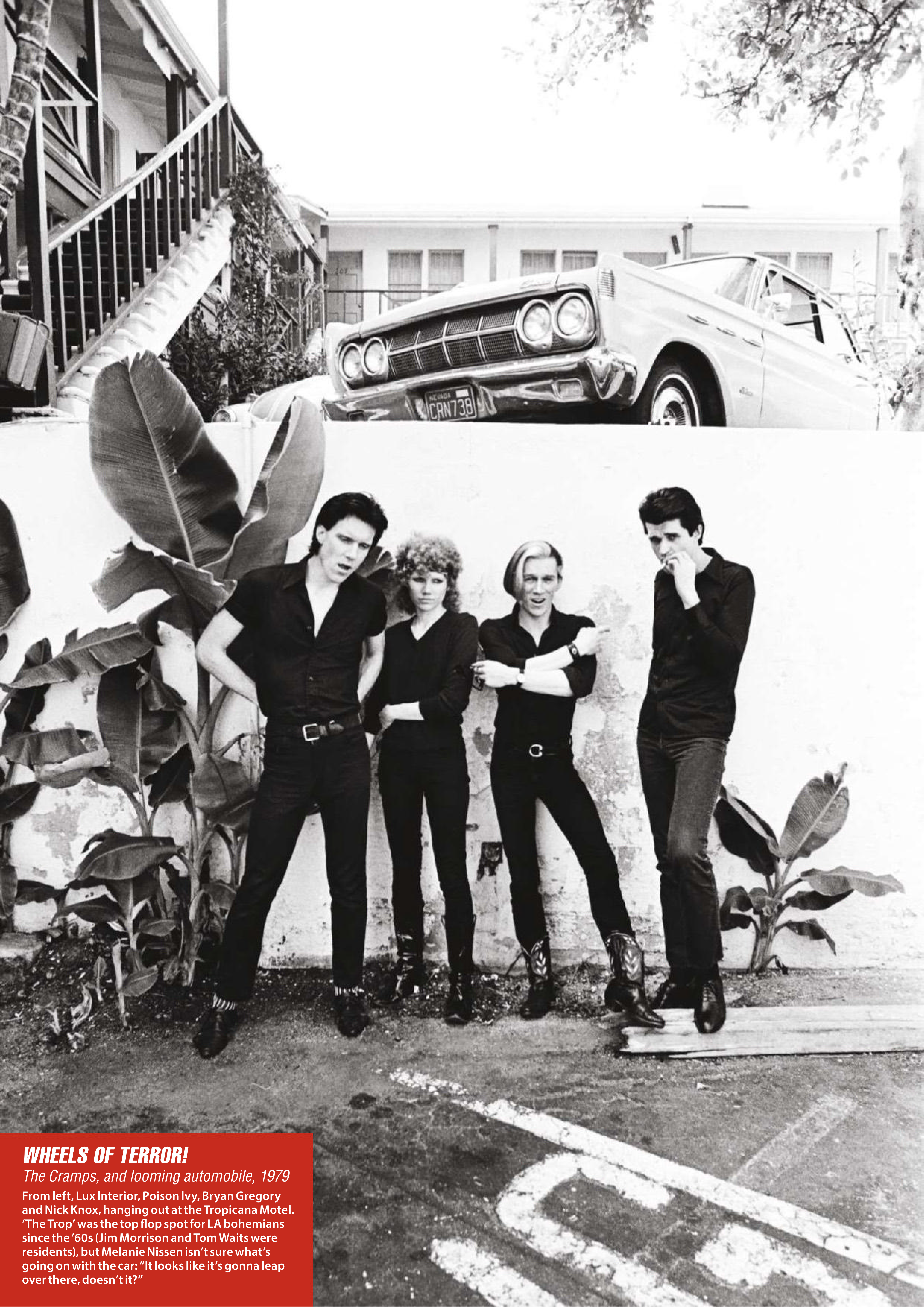
“It’s like taking walks or drinking water,” says Laura Carter. “We should all do more of it, because it’s healthy.”

Carter recalls when Will Cullen Hart designed the Elephant 6 Recording Co. logo in 1993, for The Apples In Stereo’s Tidal Wave EP. The art nouveau-via-Haight Ashbury insignia appears on numerous E6 records, serving as both a brand and a rallying cry.

“Will made this logo to kind of say ‘fuck you’ to the big labels. ‘We can have our own collective and make our own brand with nothing but inspiration.’ They could never get acceptance from one of those brands, coming from Louisiana. So they just made their own.

“And then they all get behind it,” she adds, “and it has meaning. It has actual value. I still think that’s fucking cool. More power to that kind of mentality. All you have to do is make it up.”

Adapted from Endless Endless: A Lo-Fi History Of The Elephant 6 Mystery, published by Hachette Books, price $30 in the US and £25 in the UK.



WHEELS OF TERROR!

The Cramps, and looming automobile, 1979

From left, Lux Interior, Poison Ivy, Bryan Gregory and Nick Knox, hanging out at the Tropicana Motel. 'The Trop' was the top flop spot for LA bohemians since the '60s (Jim Morrison and Tom Waits were residents), but Melanie Nissen isn't sure what's going on with the car: "It looks like it's gonna leap over there, doesn't it?"

WILDWILDWEST

The Cramps, The Germs, The Go-Go's… no one captured punk rock in LA like Slash magazine house snapper ***MELANIE NISSEN****. As a vibrant new book of her work from 1977 to 1980 underlines, the rules were there were no rules. "There was no one to say, 'Don't do that,'" she tells* ***DANNY ECCLESTON****.*

Slash
Slash

IT WAS NEVER MEANT TO BE A CAREER. Melanie Nissen already had a job – managing a bookshop in Palos Verdes – and a child, when she and her then boyfriend, Steve Samiof, decided to start a music magazine. But when it debuted, in May 1977, with The Damned's Dave Vanian on the cover, Los Angeles did not know what had hit it. "Everyone thought it was a monster magazine," remembers Nissen, cheerfully. "Because Dave Vanian looked like a vampire, and we'd called it Slash."

Nissen's new book, Hard + Fast, chronicles the dawn of punk in LA, drawing together her photographs from the Slash archives and others previously unpublished. Energy pours off its pages as The Germs, X, The Bags, The Go-Go's and more are captured on and off-stage – exuding a goofy innocence you don't see in the documentation of the London or New York punk scenes.

"I think there was a camaraderie here," says Nissen. "Just a mix of artists and bands and musicians and illustrators and everybody, a great coming together with all this freedom and no one to say, 'Don't do that,' or, 'That's *ugly*.'"

Nissen's pictures commemorate a vanished LA of fast food joints, grody club restrooms and vacant lots, the flipside of Hollywood's slick self-image. Later, the fashion and film types would flood the scene, but the biggest celebrities in Nissen's pics, apart from the bands, are skinflick auteur Russ Meyer and his well-endowed muse, Kitten Natividad.

"I love that photo!" exclaims Nissen. "The punk scene crossed into alternative movies, and kind of porno stuff. And then there was this British performance art duo, The Kipper Kids. Performance art was a real influence on the scene."

For Nissen, 1977 to 1980 was a whirl of shows at the Starwood and LA's punk Mecca, The Masque. Once in situ, she'd muscle her way to the front of the stage, her shots so close to the bands she'd almost be *in* the bands. "It could be rough and tumble, but I kind of liked it," she says. "For me the challenge was always to get the shot that no one else would get."

LA punk's salad days couldn't last. Slash put out The Germs' first single ("We took them to this weird place in Hollywood where you could make a record in a booth") on a path to becoming a label, home to Violent Femmes, The Gun Club and Dream Syndicate. The magazine checked out in 1980 and so did scene-leading Germs singer Darby Crash: suicide-by-overdose.

Nissen went on to work as an art director for majors including A&M and Virgin (she was behind the Charles Burns cover of Iggy Pop's *Brick By Brick* and the 'merkin' artwork for PiL's *That What Is Not*) but has always held a torch for the more anarchic and unself-conscious image-making of her Slash days.

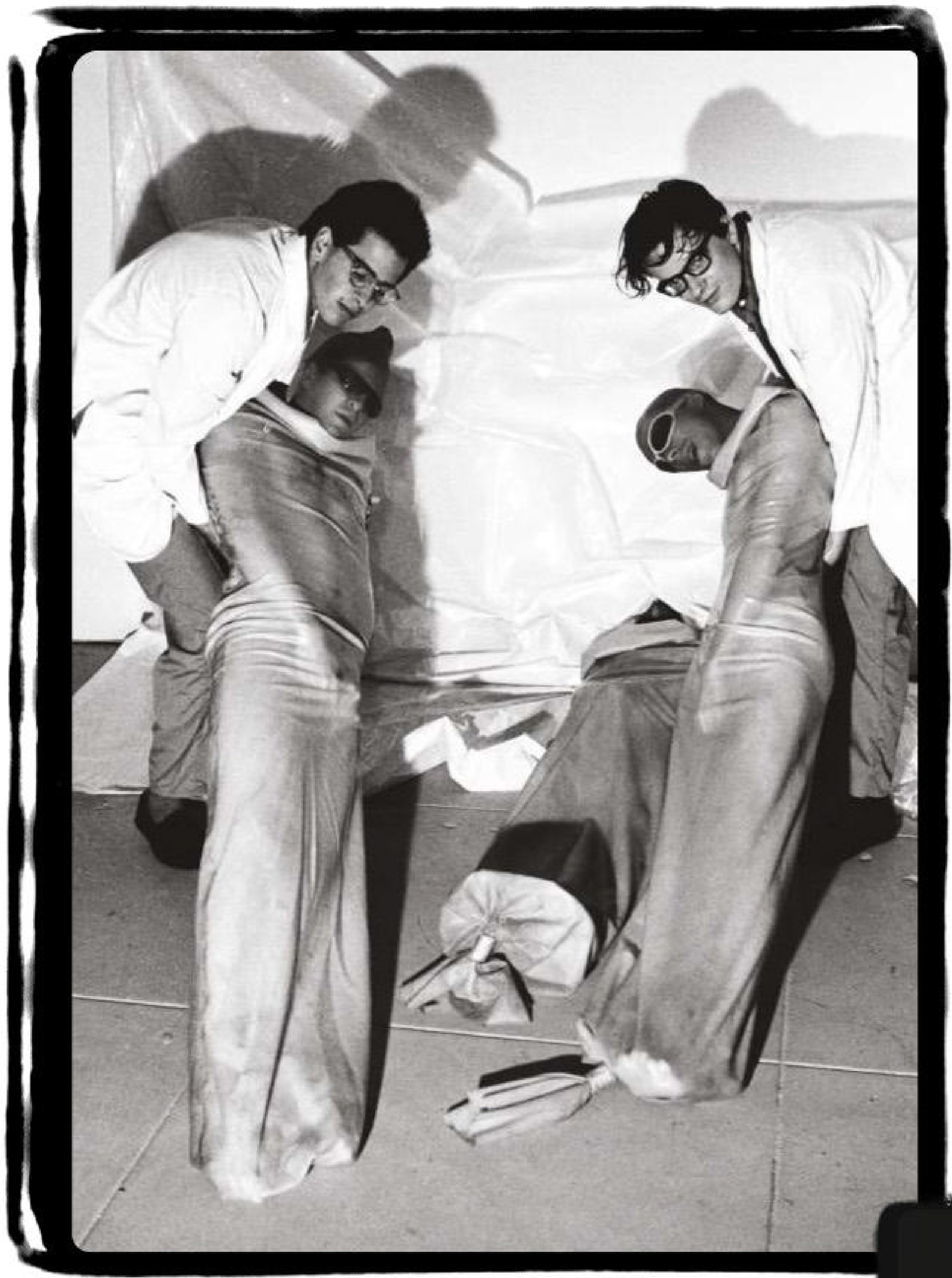
"Most of the stuff in the book was not posed at all," she reflects. "These were caught moments. And you know, if I had got to control it, I can't imagine what I would have done that I would have liked better. You know what I mean?"

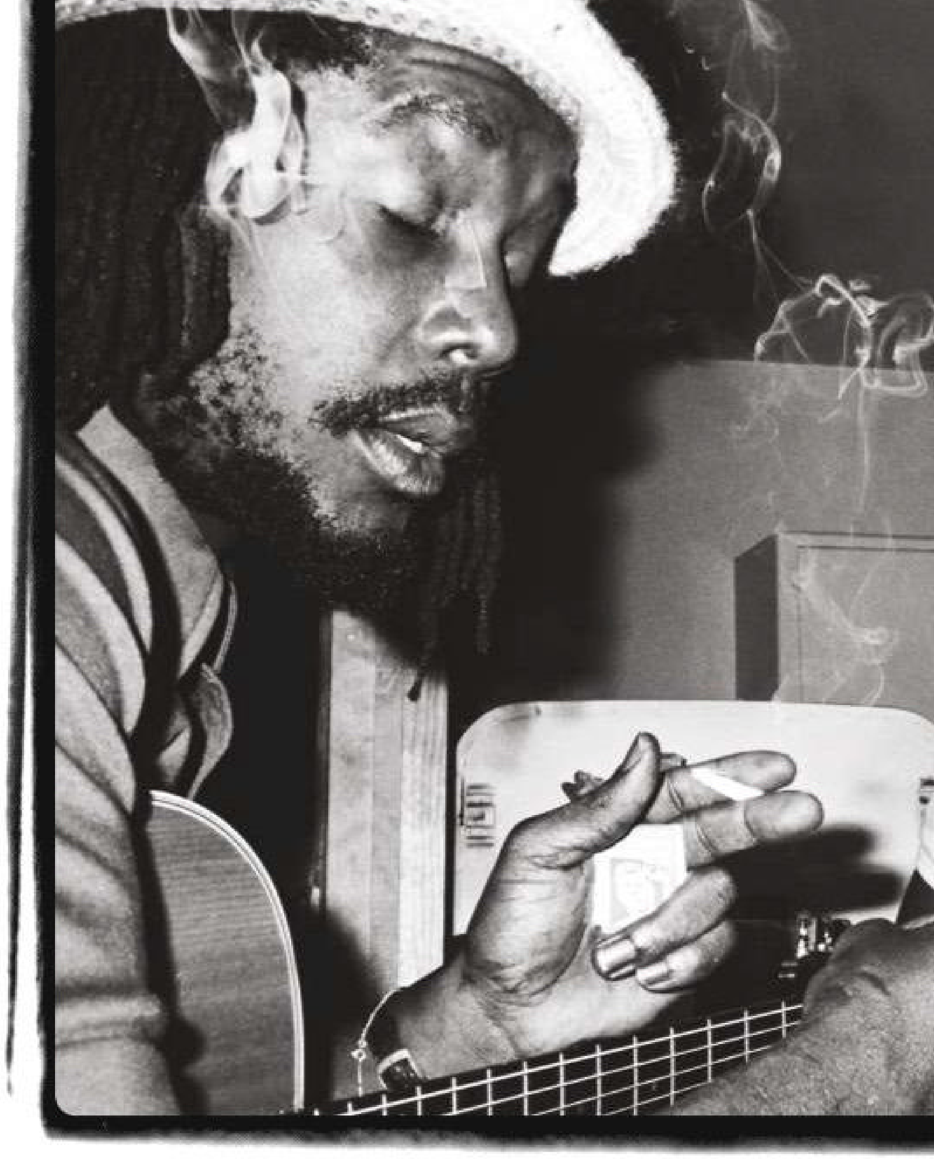
CAUGHT IN MY EYE

Melanie Nissen, 1977

Punk rock was the spur for Nissen to dive into photography, rather than vice versa. "Steve and I had read about the English bands in London – The Damned and Sex Pistols and everybody. So we went out and bought all the singles, and then we found out about these little clubs in LA. There was punk rock in LA? We were both in the arts, so we just said, Why don't we do a magazine? It started out as an art project, really."

Melanie Nissen, Steve Samiof





HOLLYWOOD BABYLON

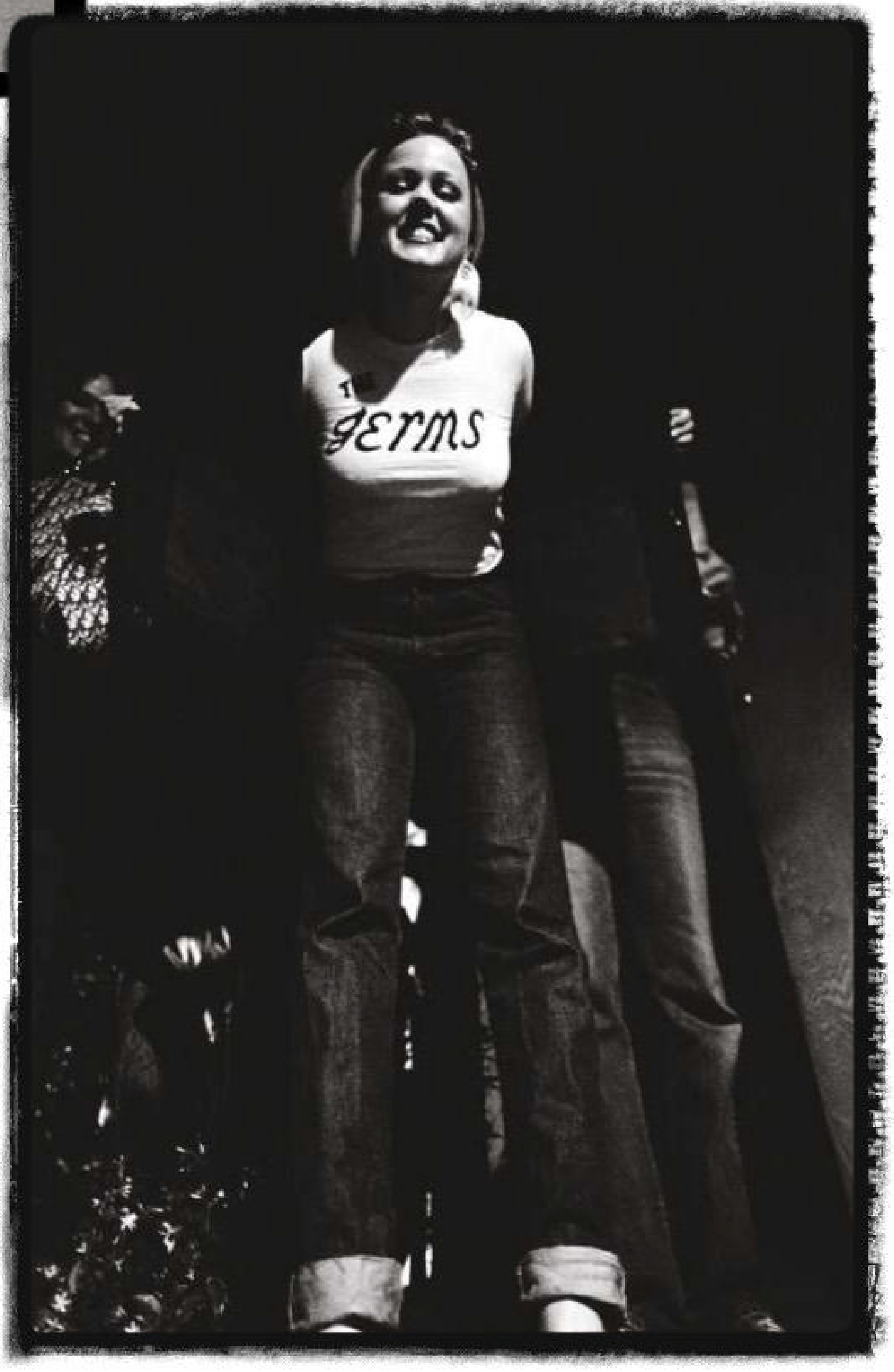
Peter Tosh and friend, 1978

Tosh captured by Nissen for the September 1978 issue of Slash, in the wake of his not-always-well-received jaunt supporting the Stones' Some Girls tour. Slash's interviewer found him positive about his new label, Rolling Stones Records, but insistent that a white man can't play reggae: "It can play the branches and the leaves, but it can never play the roots." Note his matchbook featuring the face of JFK.

RUBBER BAND BOYS

Devo bag themselves up, 1977

From left, Robert Casale, Gerald Casale, Alan Myers (on the floor), Robert Mothersbaugh and Mark Mothersbaugh mint their reputation for conceptual japes and dressing-up. "This was the first time I'd met them," says Nissen. "They came to the Slash studio and they played with all their props and the shoot took on a life of its own. I remember thinking, Should I even be watching this?, because they were in their underpants and stuff. They look like human condoms."

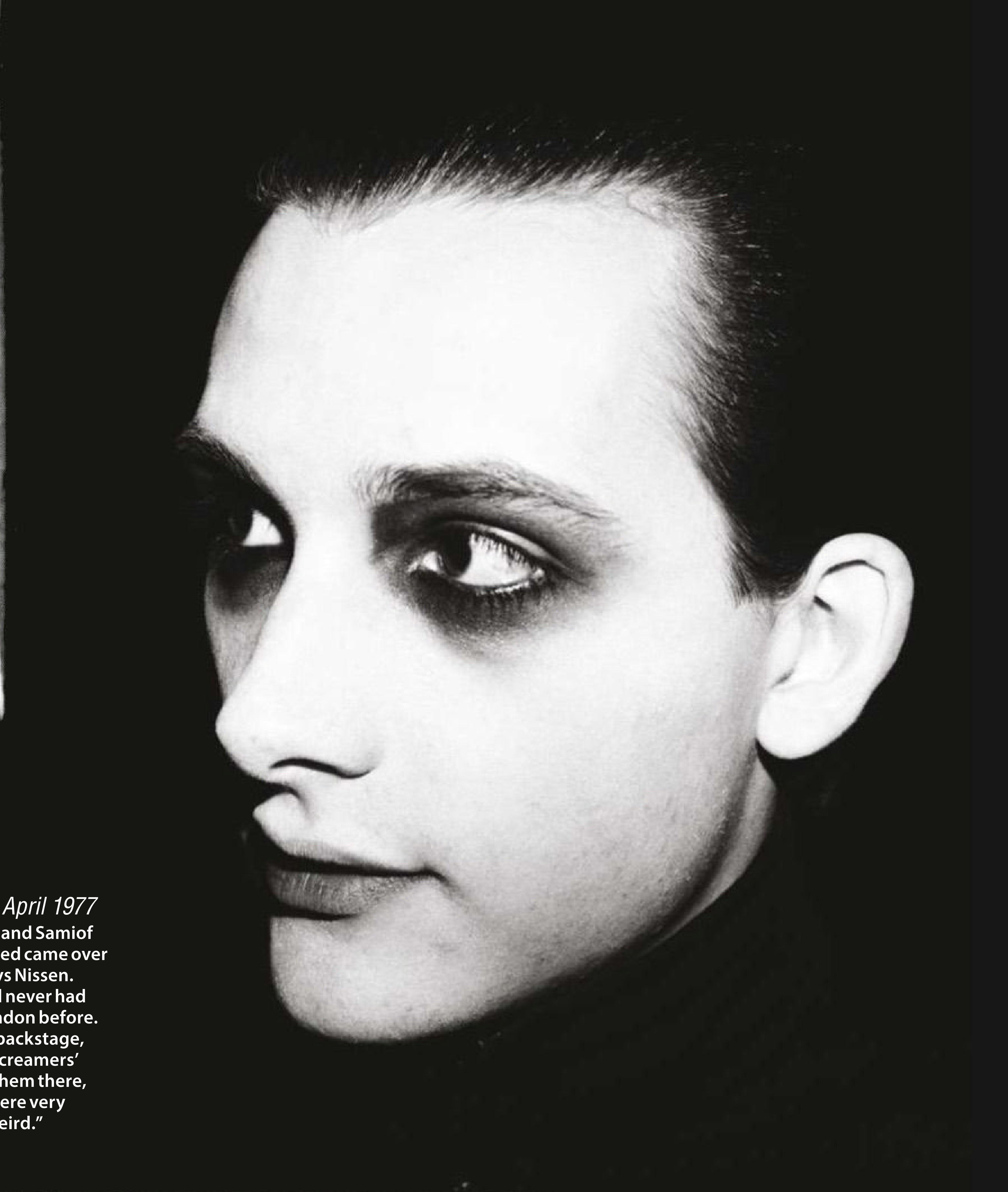


Melanie Nissen

BUGGED OUT

Belinda Carlisle, Go-Go and Germs fan

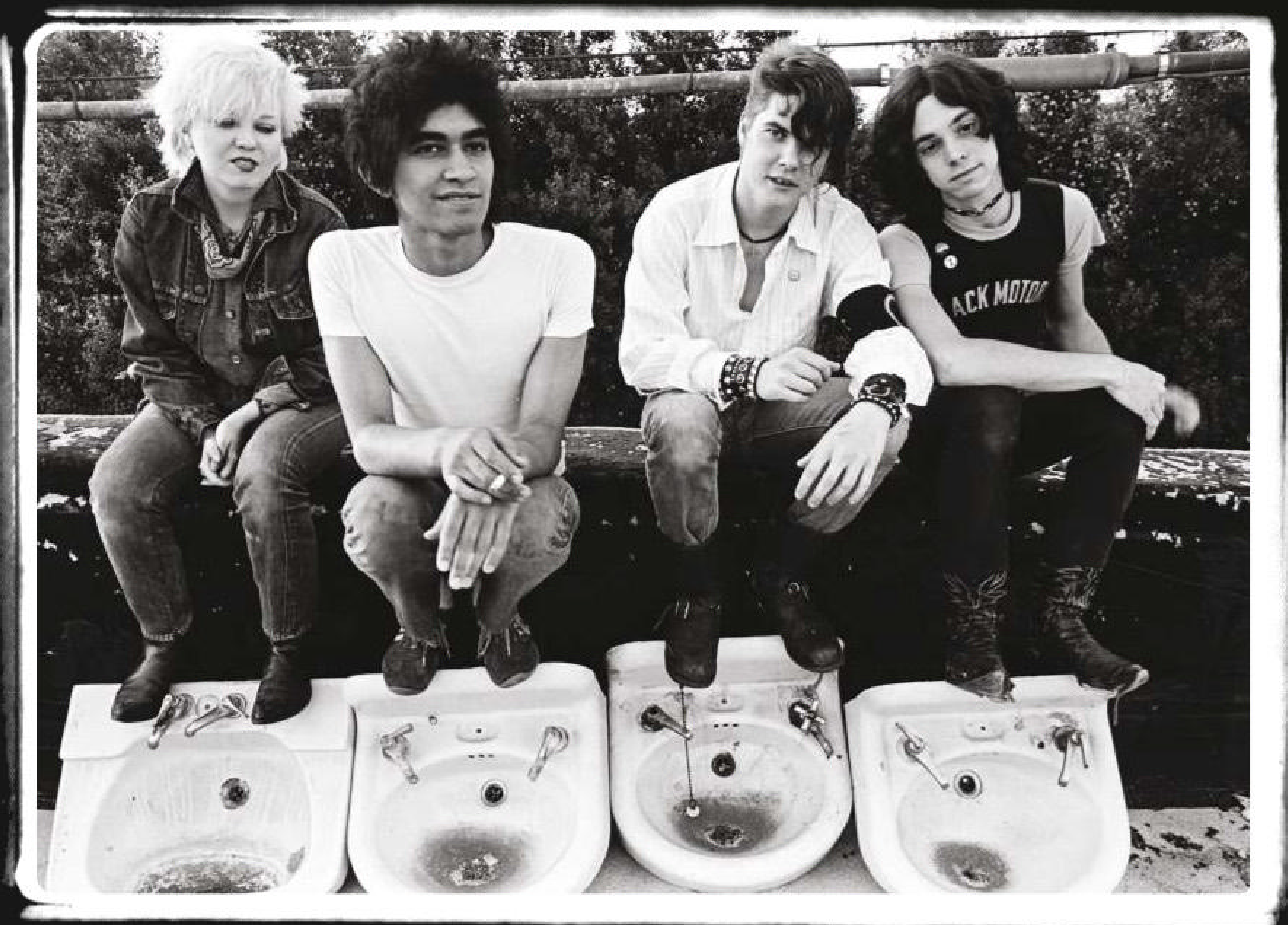
Before forming The Go-Go's with Jane Wiedlin *et al* (you can see Nissen's shots of the band live in MOJO 321), Belinda Carlisle was briefly the drummer in The Germs, under the name Dottie Danger, after she'd met Teresa Marie Ryan (AKA Lorna Doom) in an art class at Newbury Park High School. A bout of glandular fever ended her tenure in the band.



DAWN OF THE DEAD

The Damned's Dave Vanian, April 1977

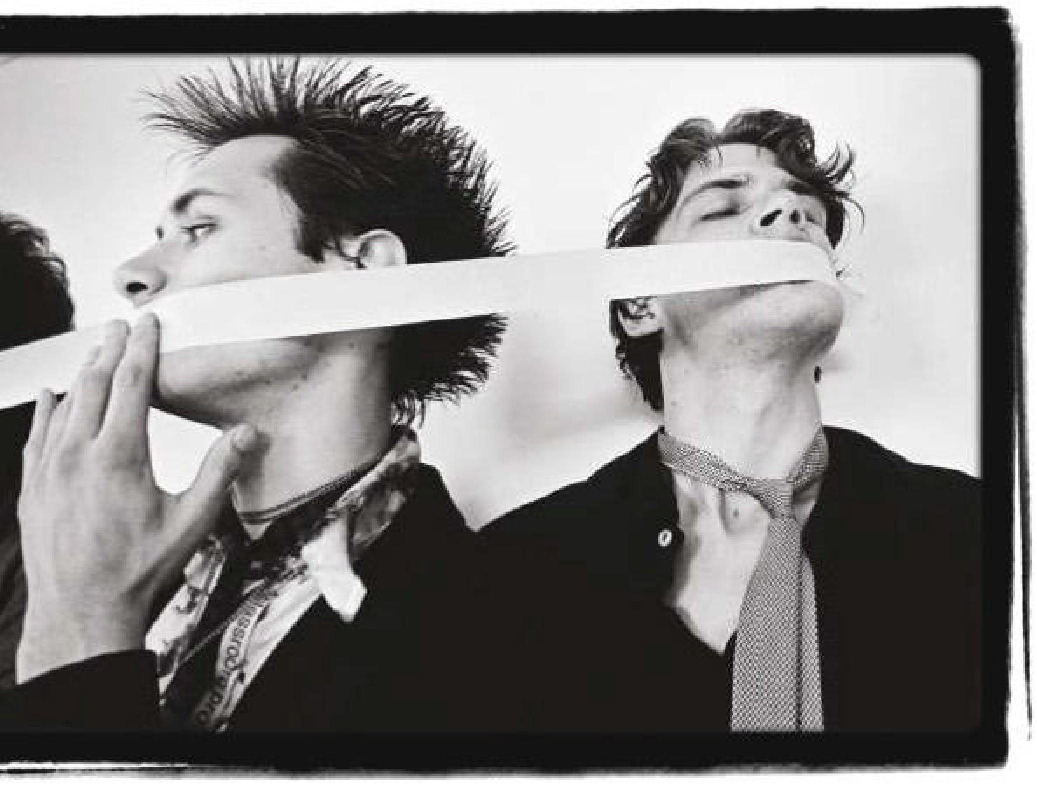
From the shoot that gave Nissen and Samiof the cover of Slash #1. "The Damned came over and played at the Starwood," says Nissen. "And that was a big thrill. We had never had a punk band come over from London before. And I wound up taking pictures backstage, with a flash. Then they came to Screamers' house. And we did a shoot with them there, which was really fun. And they were very cheeky and very nice and very weird."



PORCELAIN GODS

The Germs, 1979: (from left) Lorna Doom, Pat Smear, Darby Crash, Don Bolles

Crash had a troubled upbringing (his addict brother was murdered by a dealer) and The Germs' short life span was defined by his own drug problems and early death. "He was really sweet, and a little shy," says Nissen. "Just a baby with his little chipped tooth. As time went on, which I think you can see in the photos, he kind of starts to deteriorate. It was very sad and very upsetting."



SPEAK NO EVIL

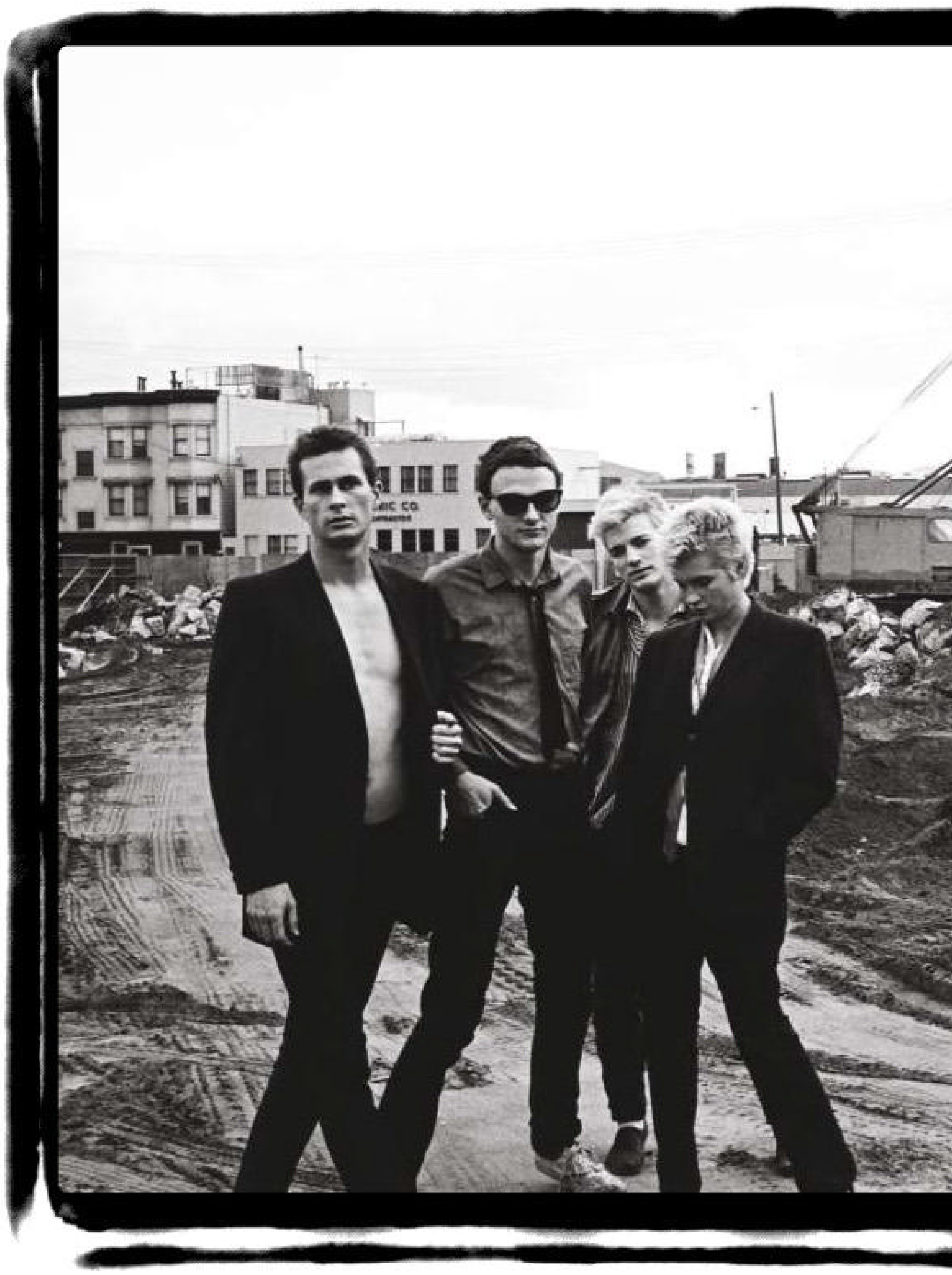
Screamers' Tommy Gear and David Brown, 1977

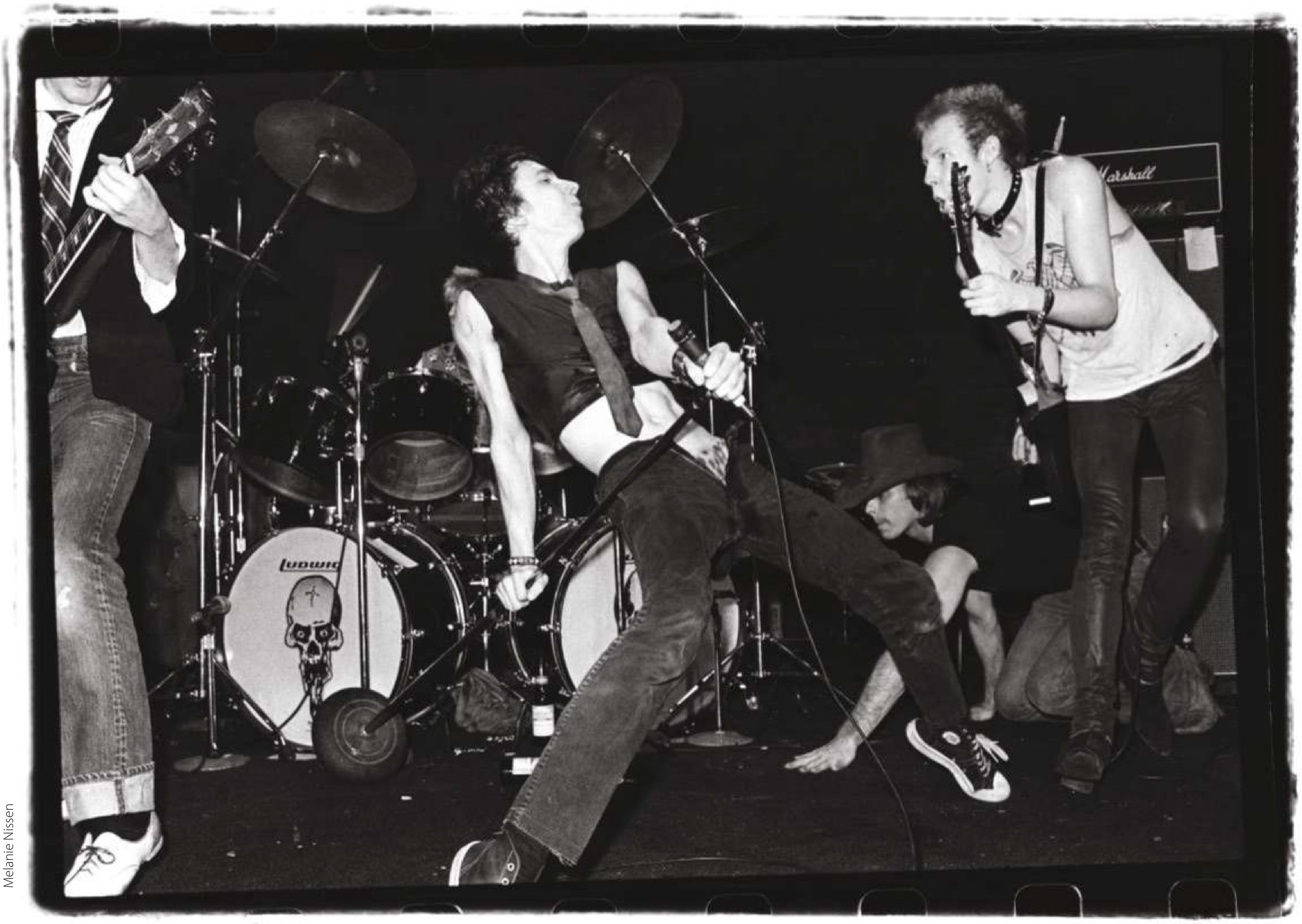
Led by rubber-faced lead singer/provocateur Tomata du Plenty (AKA David Xavier Harrigan), Screamers' presciently keyboard-based avant-pop remained unreleased in their lifetime. "The Screamers were very LA," says Nissen, "and Tomata was such a character. He threw really interesting parties where he'd invite all walks of life. And as an artist he was very challenging and creative."

YOUNG, LOUD AND SNOTTY

Dead Boys' Stiv Bators and Cheetah Chrome, 1977

Cleveland, Ohio's sonic reducers in full effect. "That's my favourite live photo actually," says Nissen. "I love the energy in it. Just that caught moment of body language. It's the ultimate punk body language." Enjoy, especially, that teasing flash of Bators' leopard-print undercrackers, and the roadie, in Stetson, taking his life in his hands.





Melanie Nissen

WE ARE THE ONE

Avengers, 1977: (from left) Danny Furious, Greg Ingraham, Jimmy Wilsey, Penelope Houston

Nissen is quick to point out that while several of West Coast punk's key bands have established international profiles – notably, X and The Germs – the important groups on the scene didn't all break out. Screamers, The Weirdos, The Zeros and (the more openly political) Avengers included. Check out the latter's Teenage Rebel and note the shades of Amyl & The Sniffers.

WHOLE LOTTA SHAKIN'

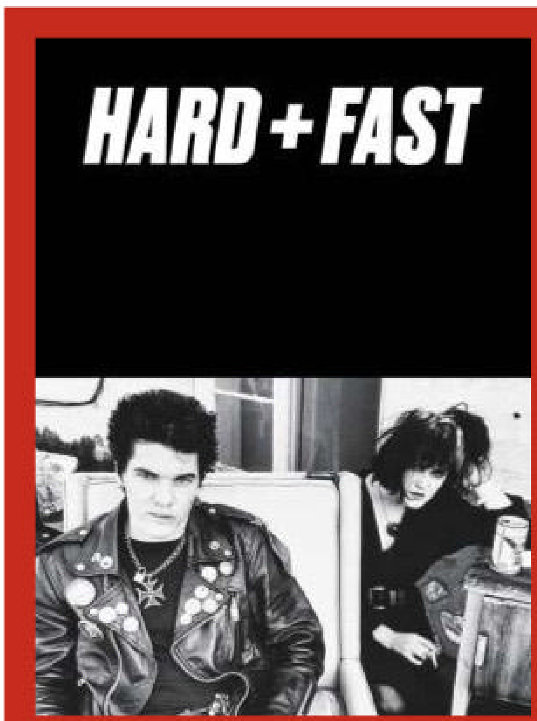
Levi Dexter of Levi & The Rockats, 1979

The LA punk scene was quick to embrace punk-adjacent strands – eg. the rockabilly revival exemplified by Southend's Levi Dexter and band. "That thing where all the music started merging," says Nissen, "punk with rockabilly and reggae. Everything started mish-mashing with everything else. I thought that was great."

CAN'T FIGHT THIS FELINE

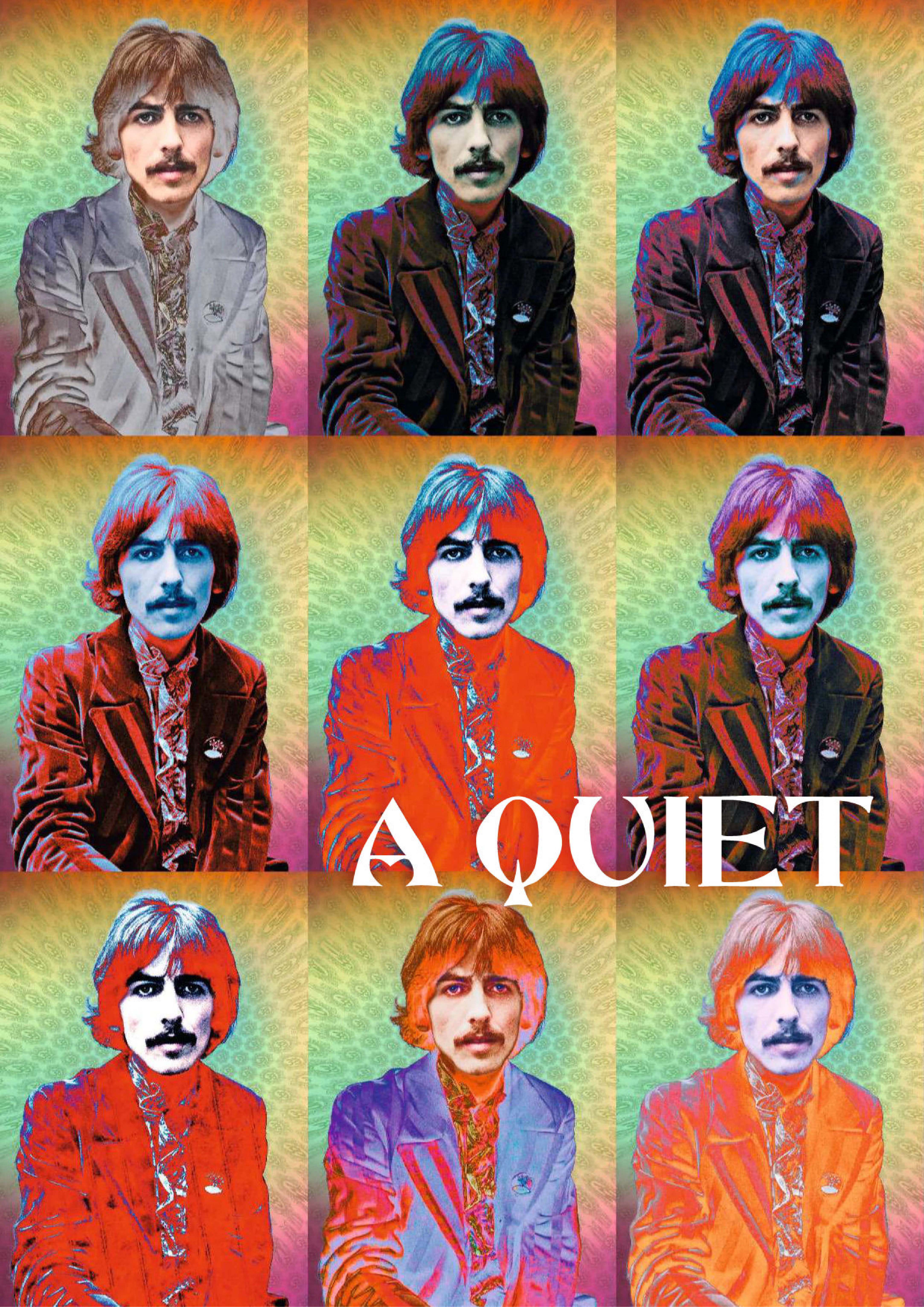
Punk fans, plus Gerard Taylor of The Wildcats, 1978

Taylor, in the foreground of Nissen's photograph, was already rock aristocracy, being the third child of former Beatles PR man Derek Taylor. Behind him, the graffiti'd walls of the Masque club are unmistakable. "It was rough," says Nissen. "There was nothing about it that was finished or done or anything. It was just this raw space that fit everybody perfectly."

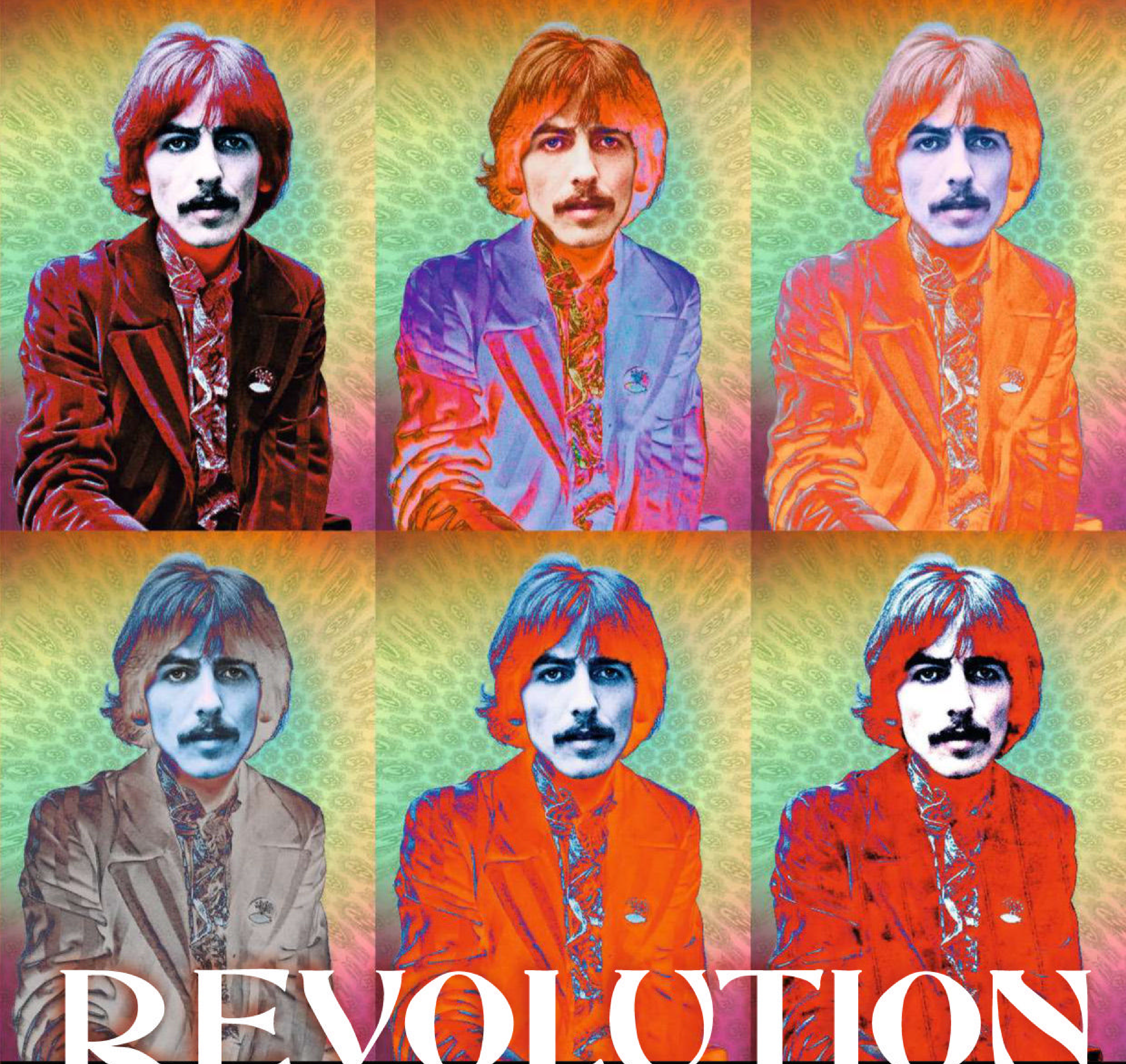


CRASH AESTHETIC

All pictures from Hard + Fast by Melanie Nissen, out now, published by Blank Industries. A special edition with three exclusive 7-inch singles by Devo, The Go-Go's plus mystery split 45 is available on a limited run.



A QUIET



REVOLUTION

Peter Jackson's Get Back trilogy has shed new light on a gripping subplot: the emergence of GEORGE HARRISON and his chafing at his status in The Beatles. But his discomfort wasn't new, and his flowering as an artist would soon bear extraordinary fruit. "George was finding his independence," discovers TOM DOYLE, "and he wouldn't be dominated."

PLUS: GEORGE'S 30 GREATEST SONGS: in and out of The Beatles.

AND: PAUL McCARTNEY: "I think what George did was phenomenal."

"IS THIS A HARRISONG?" JOHN LENNON enquires of George Harrison. It's Friday, January 3, 1969 – day two for The Beatles at Twickenham Film Studios – as seen 37 minutes into the opening episode of Peter Jackson's Get Back doc, the music head's TV event of this and many other seasons. As Harrison leads the others through the chords and melody of the just-written All Things Must Pass, Lennon and McCartney's indifference is clear – and painful to watch.

To be fair, Lennon appears to be concentrating on following the chord changes on his Lowrey organ, but McCartney comes over as semi-detached and going through the motions. Only when John, Paul and George's voices begin to knit in harmony during the chorus do we get a tantalising snatch of how great a Beatles version of the song might have been. Lennon and McCartney both mention All Things Must Pass later, when they read out lists of works-in-progress, but the band are never seen or heard returning to it.

Lennon's quip referenced Harrisongs Ltd., the publishing ➢

John Downing/Getty Images

PARLOPHONE
45 R.P.M.
R 5675
NORTHERN SONGS, NCB
7XCE 18430
℗ 1968
THE INNER LIGHT
THE BEATLES
Producer George Martin
MADE IN GT. BRITAIN
ISN'T IT A PITY
STEREO
2995
GEORGE HARRISON

By George!: (clockwise from left) Harrison gets cagey, March 1966; Bombay-recorded 45 The Inner Light and the Beatles-rejected Isn't It A Pity; George and Pattie Boyd hanging out with Frank Sinatra in 1968; Harrison's first and only Beatles A-side, Something; on-stage with Dylan, 1971.

≺ company Harrison had begun funnelling songs through after his contract with the Lennon/McCartney-biased Northern Songs (with its low royalty rate – another bone of contention) had lapsed in March 1968. But he was also referring to the compositions the increasingly prolific George had been trying, and often failing, to offer the others for inclusion on Beatle records since 1963.

Harrison's thwarted songwriter frustrations come to a head in Get Back. When he suggests to McCartney that the live album/TV show project might somehow involve more collective responsibility in their writing – "It should be where if you write a song, I feel as though I wrote it, and *vice versa*..." – McCartney mumbles, "Yeah," and flicks the ash off his cigar, as Ringo looks on morosely. Later, playing I Me Mine to the others in the studio at Apple, Harrison snaps, "I don't give a fuck if you don't want it. I'll put it in my musical."

"George was writing more," Ringo remembered in 1995's The Beatles Anthology documentary. "He wanted things to go his way. When we first started, they basically went John and Paul's way. But George was finding his independence and he wouldn't be dominated."

Lennon and McCartney's underrating of Harrison – and lack of diplomacy – is evident throughout Get Back, as is the fact that the latter seems to be spoiling for a fight. But, by Wednesday, January 29, the day before the rooftop gig, George had reached a decision as regards his future creativity. He told an encouraging John and Yoko, "I've got so many songs that I've got like my quota of tunes for the next 10 years or albums. I'd just like to maybe do an album of [my] songs. 'Cos all these songs of mine I could give to people who could do 'em good. But I suddenly realised, 'Y'know, fuck all that.' I'm just gonna do me for a bit."

IF WE COULD WATCH A TIME-LAPSE FILM OF GEORGE Harrison's blossoming as a songwriter, it would show an initially tentative growth taking on strange, unusual and, ultimately, beautiful forms through the 22 solo George compositions that appeared on Beatles records.

It was in the middle of the group's six-night August 1963 run at the Gaumont in Bournemouth, when Harrison was ill and recuperating in his room at the Palace Court Hotel, that he was moved to pick up a guitar and write the exploratory Don't Bother Me. Previously, Harrison had co-credits with McCartney (The Quarrymen's In Spite Of All The Danger) and Lennon (the '61 instrumental Cry For A Shadow), but this was his first attempt to fly solo.

"I decided to try to write a song, just for a laugh," he later told Beatles biographer Hunter Davies. "I forgot all about it 'til we came to record the next LP. It was a fairly crappy song."

Appearing at the end of '63 on *With The Beatles*, Don't Bother Me was better than Harrison's dismissive estimation – musically upbeat, but lyrically grumpy. The latter aspect was set to become a recurring motif in his early songs, though there would be two further Beatles LPs before the public would hear another Harrison tune. "I was involved in so many other things that I never got round to it," he told Davies.

In truth, as George Martin remembered, Harrison had presented the others with half-finished songs in the interim, but "none of us had liked something he had written". McCartney, in Anthology, admitted that he and John tended to edge George out. "I don't think he thought of himself very much as a songwriter," he said. "John and I would obviously dominate... not really meaning to, but we were 'Lennon and McCartney'."

Help! in 1965 featured Harrison's achingly lovelorn I Need You and comparatively ho-hum You Like Me Too Much, but as Lennon later confessed, supporting George's writing was an obligation rather than a pleasure.

"There was an embarrassing period where his songs weren't that good," John reckoned. "Nobody wanted to say anything, but we all worked on them – like we did on Ringo's. I mean, we put more work into those songs than we did on some of our stuff. So, he just wasn't in the same league for a long time – that's not putting him down, he just hadn't had the practice as a writer that we had."

Harrison was a fast learner, however. Musically, he filled his songs with fresh outside influences, copping Roger McGuinn's chiming 12-string Rickenbacker riff from The Byrds' arrangement of The Bells Of Rhymney for If I Needed Someone on *Rubber Soul*, or throwing in the odd, effective chord change, such as the dissonant E7 flat 9 in I Want To Tell You on *Revolver* (that first appears before the line "When you're here" and was, for Harrison, meant to convey frustration at his inarticulacy).

Still, the saturnine lyrical tendency remained, whether George was attacking targets vague (the personal/political judgements of Think For Yourself) or very specific (Taxman), the latter so obviously great

Bob Whitaker

that it was pushed to pole position in the track list of *Revolver*. At the same time, an inner peace seemed to descend upon Harrison, as experiments with LSD led to a deeper spiritual search.

Some cynicism lingered in the words of Love You To, Harrison's first raga-influenced offering ("There's people standing round/ Who'll screw you in the ground"), but by Within You Without You and particularly the Bombay-recorded The Inner Light – the first Harrison composition to appear on a Beatles single, the B-side of Lady Madonna – the heaviness in Harrison's soul had, for now, lifted.

BY *THE WHITE ALBUM*, HARRISON WAS GETTING a song per side of the twin disc album, and lyrically, psychedelia had given way to surrealism. George had bought into the '67 Summer of Love only very briefly, overwhelmed by lysergic wonder in It's All Too Much (written and recorded that year but surfacing in '69 on the *Yellow Submarine* soundtrack), before becoming disillusioned and fearful when he was mobbed on a visit to Haight-Ashbury. That sense of trippy paranoia was beautifully conveyed in the woozy Blue Jay Way on *Magical Mystery Tour*, while earlier '67 recording and *Sgt. Pepper* also-ran Only A Northern Song might have been a pop at his publisher but the sense of a band "going wrong" was unsettlingly and brilliantly realised through Tomorrow Never Knows-styled tape loop montage.

Then, as they did for all The Beatles, things got weirder. If While My Guitar Gently Weeps was gorgeous in its abstraction, then Piggies and Savoy Truffle were intangibly scary (even before the Manson Family had taken the former's contempt for unenlightened humanity as a licence to cull). Elsewhere, in his fourth contribution to *The White Album*, George's reluctance to push himself forward was rendered in audio. Arguably, only with the full-fat Giles Martin remix in 2018 did the whispery Long, Long, Long finally reveal its true wonder.

All the while, it was hard to shake the impression that Harrisongs were being suppressed by Lennon and McCartney. Written in 1966, and destined for *All Things Must Pass*, Isn't It A Pity, his gentle lament for failing inter-personal relationships, was repeatedly overlooked for Beatles albums (engineer Geoff Emerick recalled that it was considered for inclusion on *Sgt. Pepper*; Beatles author/historian Mark Lewisohn says it was in the running for *Revolver*). When Harrison re-aired it at the Twickenham sessions in '69, he had to remind Lennon that it had been rejected by him three years before.

Harrison likely fancied Isn't It A Pity to be his first "standard", since he thought about offering it to Frank Sinatra after meeting the singer in Los Angeles in the summer of '68 when producing Jackie Lomax's *Is This What You Want?* for Apple. Harrison should perhaps have trusted his instincts. Sinatra was later to cover another Harrison composition, Something, lauding it as "the greatest love song of the past 50 years" (though initially he misattributed it to Lennon and McCartney).

Something was, of course, Harrison's first and only Beatles A-side – a sign that Paul and John were finally prepared to accept that George was now their songwriting equal. In a conversation between the three taped at Apple in 1969 by Lennon and Ono's PA Anthony Fawcett, McCartney said as much: "I think that until now, until this year, our songs have been better than George's. Now this year his songs are at least as good as ours."

George chipped in, "That's a myth, because most of the songs this year I wrote last year or the year before, anyway. Maybe now, I just don't care whether you are going to like them or not. I just do 'em."

"MOST OF THE SONGS THIS YEAR I WROTE LAST YEAR OR THE YEAR BEFORE. MAYBE NOW, I JUST DON'T CARE WHETHER YOU ARE GOING TO LIKE THEM." GEORGE TO PAUL, 1969

The Beatles
Something
Come Together
Apple

THE DELUGE OF SONGS THAT revealed themselves on *All Things Must Pass* in November 1970 was perhaps inevitable, then. It was fitting that the triple LP's opening track, I'd Have You Anytime, was a Harrison/Dylan original, since the one songwriter who really took George seriously, pre-*Abbey Road*, was Bob.

As the two became friends, writing I'd Have You Anytime together in Woodstock at Thanksgiving in 1968 (only weeks before the Get Back/Let It Be sessions began), Dylan's endorsement emboldened Harrison, while in turn the latter encouraged the former to employ more sophisticated chords in his own compositions. Dylan had long admired The Beatles' twisty and original progressions, saying, "Their chords were outrageous, just outrageous."

Ken Scott, one of the engineers on *All Things Must Pass*, had first met Harrison in 1964 when working on *A Hard Day's Night*. By 1970, he could see that George was walking taller. "He was no longer under the thumb of John and Paul," Scott told MOJO in 2020. "So, he was a lot freer. He had proved his worth as a songwriter. This gives you a lot more courage, I guess, to put forth your own ideas."

The spiritual dimensions of *All Things Must Pass* were explored more fully on Harrison's second solo album, 1973's *Living In The Material World*. Bassist (and *Revolver* cover artist) Klaus Voormann played on both records and remembers that, "on the next LP it was much more apparent. There were [mostly] religious type of songs on it. I certainly felt George was very, very serious about it and he needed a sort of anchor."

From here, point proven, Harrison's output grew patchier, as his tendency towards reticence returned. Ironically, he seemed happiest when back in a band. His Traveling Wilburys compadre Tom Petty revealed that George, "told me many times he was very uncomfortable being the guy up front having to sing all the songs. It was just not his idea of fun."

As a modern barometer of Harrison's songwriting success, however, a search for The Beatles on Spotify reveals that Here Comes The Sun beats any and all Lennon/McCartney songs in popularity, with over three quarters of a billion plays – 300 million more than its nearest competitor, Let It Be, and nearly double those for Yesterday. In the end, the dark horse may have won the race after all. ➢

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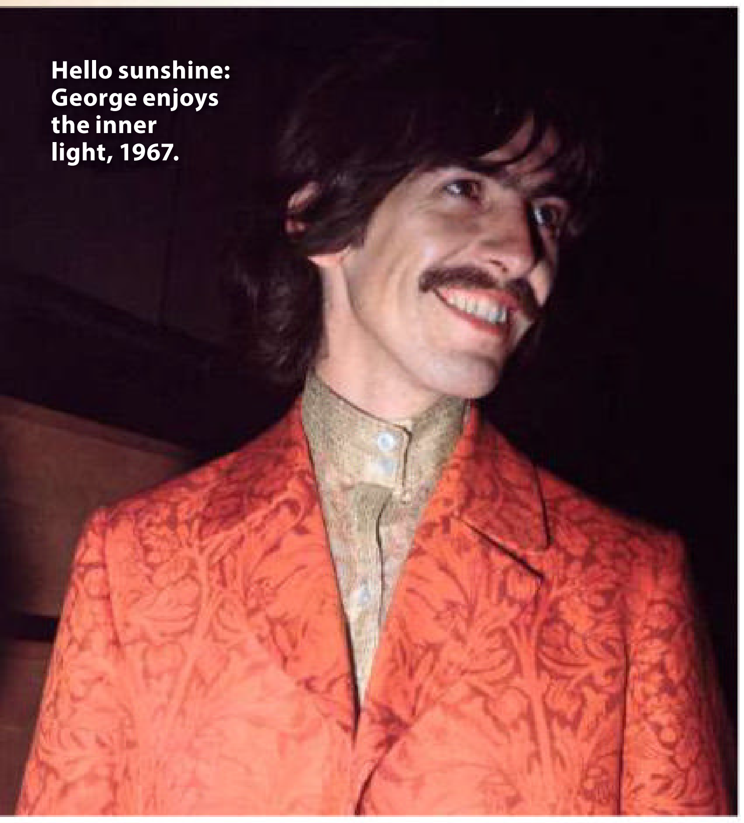
HALFWAY TO PARADISE

Chewing on life's gristle, George would sometimes glimpse the Godhead. It's what makes his 30 Greatest Songs so fascinating.



Hello sunshine: George enjoys the inner light, 1967.

Getty

30

DEEP BLUE

(B-side of Bangla Desh, 1971)

Lilting country blues homage to George's late mother.

Recorded in Los Angeles in July 1971 at the Bangla Desh sessions, and inspired by the death of his mother Louise the previous year, Deep Blue featured Harrison on multi-tracked dobro and acoustic guitar, plus Jim Keltner on gentle drums. For all the lyrical despair ("when the sun shines it's not enough to make me feel bright"), the tone is uplifting. Surprisingly overlooked for LP inclusion (beyond '76's *Best Of)* until added to 2014's remaster of *Living In The Material World*. *JA*

29

FISH ON THE SAND

(from *Cloud Nine*, 1987)

With a riff this good, George could afford to be pitiable.

GEORGE HARRISON
cloud nine

Kids today would call TMI. "You know I need you… If I'm not with you/I'm not so much of a man/I'm like a fish on the sand." Lyrically, the portrait it paints is of a needy floundering creature, "no use to no one else". But, of course, that's not all. Sustained and nourished by Jim Keltner's neo-motorik drumming and a 12-string Rickenbacker riff The Byrds would kill for, George is singing with power and defiance, the musical yang to his inner yin. Which one, it asks, is telling the truth? *AM*

28

BE HERE NOW

(from *Living In The Material World*, 1973)

Nice song, shame about the Oasis album.

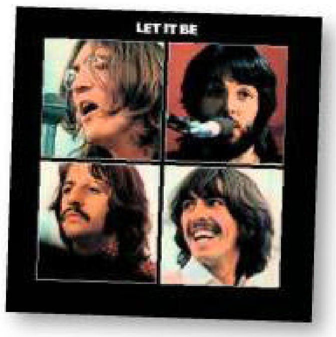
Written in Los Angeles in 1971, its dreamlike melody fittingly coming to Harrison as he was falling asleep, this is a meditative instruction in song ("A mind that wants to wander round a corner/Is an unwise mind"), with a title lifted from a book by American spiritual teacher Ram Dass, matched to reverie-inducing organ drones and intricate acoustic guitar playing in an open tuning. George's unhurried vocal delivery added to the air of beautiful stillness. *TD*

27

I ME MINE

(from *Let It Be*, 1970)

The *Get Back/Let It Be* meta-narrative, in 3/4.



Five days into the fraught Get Back process, Harrison, the one seemingly most critical of the whole shebang, was moved to write a waltz with what turned out to be one of *Let It Be*'s sweetest melodies and most evasive lyrics. Is he addressing the unhealthy self-absorption required of the three songwriting Beatles to conjure new material to stay at the toppermost? When he sings, "Now they're frightened of leaving it…" does he mean the band? *JI*

26

TRY SOME BUY SOME

(from *Living In The Material World*, 1973)

Say no to drugs euphorically, and yes to God plaintively?

George Harrison

Surplus to *All Things Must Pass*, the song contrasts the chemical bliss then enslaving bestie Eric Clapton with George's own divine submission, a message muddied by the sumptuously seductive chorus on which the song fades, tunesmith George and producer Phil Spector pulling out all stops. First recorded in 1971 by Ronnie Spector for an abandoned album on Apple, two years on Harrison replaced her vocals with his own, and divided critics and fans. An enthusiastic David Bowie covered it faithfully in 2003. *MS*

25

PIGGIES

(from *The White Album*, 1968)

Unpleasant to the point of genius.

Harrison had a lifelong aversion to authority figures (dig his sarcastic duel with the condescending adman in A Hard Day's Night). Kicked off with an aristocratic harpsichord, Piggies satirises the *haute* snobbery of the upper classes, ending with a Python-esque group-sing. Mother Louise suggested the "damn good whacking" line. As for other interpretations, he noted it had "nothing to do with American policemen or Californian shagnasties!" after the Manson Family appropriated the title during their murder spree. *MSi*

24

ALL THOSE YEARS AGO

(from *Somewhere In England*, 1981)

A poignant tribute to John.

George Harrison
Somewhere in England

Originally written for Ringo Starr with very different lyrics, Harrison reclaimed this irresistible, elegiac, George Martin-produced melody in the wake of John Lennon's murder and it was the first time the three surviving Beatles had appeared on record together since the split. The youngest Beatle confessed that "I always looked up to you", while Imagine and All You Need Is Love were referenced, Al Kooper added rumbling piano, and a world shook up by Lennon's death momentarily seemed a kinder place. *JA*

23

OLD BROWN SHOE

(B-side of The Ballad Of John And Yoko, 1969)

George sheds his (thin) skin and escapes "from this zoo".

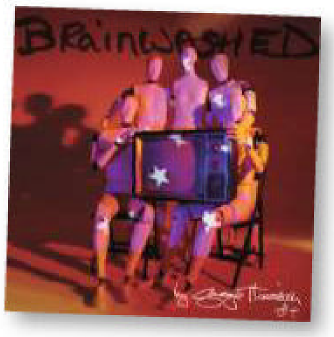
This barnstorming stomper was introduced by Harrison during the January sessions at Apple Studios as a 'rocker' – no doubt hoping to engage his bandmates' attention after slowies like I Me Mine met mixed reactions – and was rehearsed then, before a full recording in April. A winning mixture of ska and boogie, with an incredible bridge where Harrison tracks the bass with his vaulting guitar, it's one of the very best recordings from The Beatles' last year – and one that would have lifted *Let It Be*. *JS*

22

MARWA BLUES

(from *Brainwashed*, 2002)

A master guitarist lets his fingers do the talking.



Taking up side two of Ravi Shankar's 1968 *In New York* album, the traditional Indian classical Raga Marwa evokes a profoundly sunset mood pregnant with acceptance. A favourite of Harrison's, he re-imagined it showcasing slide guitar in an instrumental evoking Hawaii, where he had a home, as well as India. Recorded in his final

In the shade: Harrison thinking for himself, Acapulco, January 1977.

© 1978 Ed Thrasher/MPTV/Eyevine

years, it was completed posthumously by son Dhani and Jeff Lynne (acoustic guitars and keyboards), Ray Cooper (percussion) and Marc Mann (strings). A beautiful and fitting last musical testament. *MS*

21

BEHIND THAT LOCKED DOOR

(from *All Things Must Pass*, 1970)

Classic country lament with a classic country conceit.

Harrison's entreaty to Bob Dylan to leave the reclusive shell he'd been in after his 1966 motorcycle accident, begun the night before Bob and The Band played the Isle Of Wight festival in August 1969. He emphasises Dylan's international importance – "The love you are blessed with/The world's waiting for" – and encourages him to emerge "from behind that locked door". Smitten with *Nashville Skyline*, George invited Nashville cat Pete Drake to add lush pedal steel guitar. *MSi*

20

I WANT TO TELL YOU

(from *Revolver*, 1966)

Paperback Writer, with a twist of bitters.

Many of Harrison's Beatles songs have snags: unpolished aspects to their composition which may or may not be deliberate. But in his third contribution to *Revolver*, he confidently makes the wonkiest component – a dissonant E7 chord with a flattened 9th, pounded on piano – the song's hook. Souring the air of positivity, it serves to sonically illustrate that the inability to express oneself – the subject of the lyric – is painful, even if the feeling you can't express is a pleasurable one. *JI*

19

ISN'T IT A PITY

(from *All Things Must Pass*, 1970)

Finally, a Beatle holdover finds a home.

Often accused of writing dirges and being generally lugubrious in song, Harrison sounds completely sincere in this sad, unhurried epic written for but unused by The Beatles, whom it probably also addresses: "Isn't it a pity how we break each other's hearts and cause each other pain," functioning as a long goodbye to his former band. John Barham's stirring orchestration points his lament heavenward. The use of Hey Jude's "na-na-na na" on the fade is a typically bittersweet Georgian touch. *JI*

18

WHEN WE WAS FAB

(from *Cloud Nine*, 1987)

Not the blithe nostalgia piece it first seems: "It's all over now…"

George and Jeff Lynne composed this Beatles tribute on a lark, "written as a joke" after "bottles of champagne". Co-produced with Lynne, it's got Walrus-ish cellos, a sitar, glorious harmonies and, most importantly, Ringo on drums. Sinatra, Dylan, You've Really Got A Hold On Me and Within You Without You refs add period vibes. The song yielded one of Harrison's finest videos, directed by Godley & Creme, loaded with Fab Four in-jokes and guests Ringo, Lynne, Elton John and Beatles aide Neil Aspinall. *MSi*

17

LONG LONG LONG

(from *The White Album*, 1968)

Surface simplicity deepens at the death into ineffable mystery.

Written in Rishikesh where Transcendental Meditation deepened his spiritual search, Harrison modelled his song of non-specific praise on Dylan's Sad-Eyed Lady Of The Lowlands, achingly plaintive despite its F major key. Coloured in the studio by Paul's churchy Hammond and Ringo's subtly dramatic drum fills, serendipity intervened in the fade as an organ note set a bottle of Blue Nun atop the Leslie speaker reverberating eerily as George sighed, spectrally cross-echoing with *The White Album*'s other haunted moods. *MS*

16

THINK FOR YOURSELF

(from *Rubber Soul*, 1965)

George out-Lennons Lennon on his fifth composition.

If Harrison's songwriting gifts arrived initially through Beatle osmosis, then here it's John he's channelling. Dig the bitter romantic sentiments (that chilling demand to "rectify" past mistakes – ouch) and compositional quirks – no fixed key, an asymmetrical metre to the verses, the unexpected shift from A minor to C7 for the grooving chorus. McCartney's pioneering fuzz bass overdub is much admired, but deflects from ➢

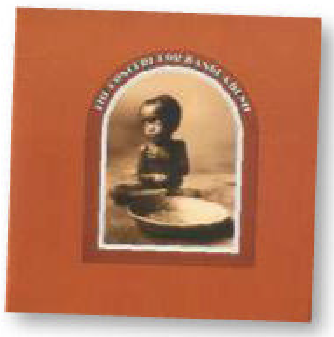
the fact the lead guitarist himself sees no requirement for a lead guitar break. A brilliant, intuitively psychedelic bridge to *Revolver*. *PG*

15

WAH-WAH

(from *The Concert For Bangladesh*, 1971)

A get-stuffed grouse swells into this gospel-rock extravaganza.



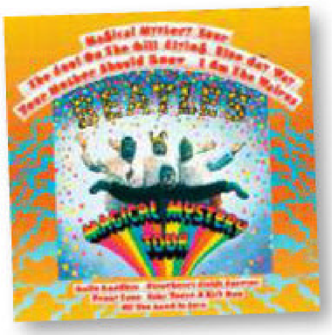
Written back home in Esher the afternoon Harrison flounced out of The Beatles at lunchtime on January 10, 1969, Wah-Wah alternates bilious moan and shackles-off shout, raucous brass bouncing off a double-drum-powered up-yours guitar riff. In the studio his reedy voice was submerged in Phil Spector's hyper-reverbed all-star big band wall of sound, but on-stage George bit harder. Wah-Wah kicked off his Concert For Bangladesh set, the resentful kid brother loud and proud at last. *MS*

14

BLUE JAY WAY

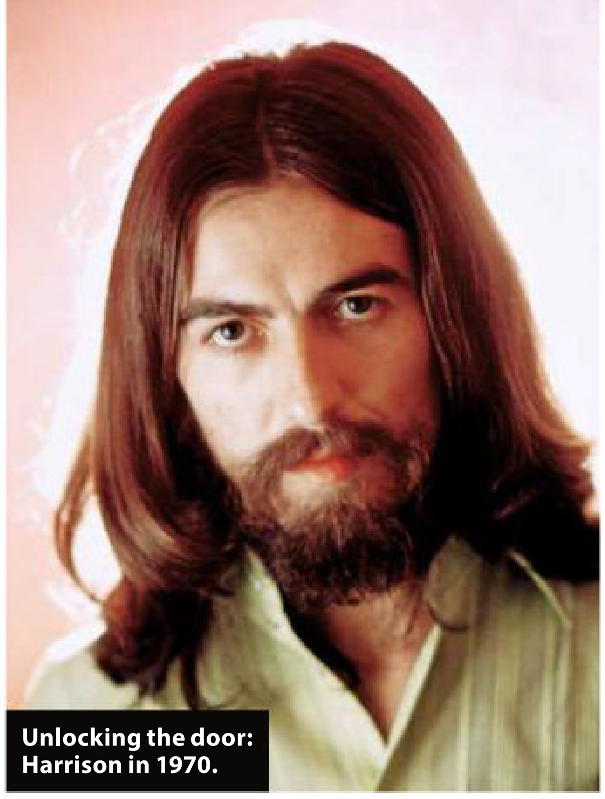
(from *Magical Mystery Tour*, 1967)

No bed for Beatle George: a sleepless Harrison loses himself in Los Angeles.



Drowsily sketched out in a rented LA house while the jet-lagged Harrison waited up for press officer Derek Taylor, this yawning drone builds into an accidental elegy for the Summer of Love. Uneasy details – fog, ambiguously lost friends, that inexplicable proliferation of policemen "on the street" – are intensified by time-distorting phasing, stalking cello and pleading, disembodied vocals ("please don't be long"). Even without knowing that its creepy-crawl insinuations drew Charles Manson's attentions, you can detect the sound of the counter-culture taking a terrifying wrong turn. *VS*

Handle with care: George with one of his Siamese cats at home in Esher.



Unlocking the door: Harrison in 1970.

13

BEWARE OF DARKNESS

(from *All Things Must Pass*, 1970)

The song Eric Clapton chose to cover at the 2002 Concert For George.

Had it been on a Beatles album, this beautiful ballad would still rank among the band's best. Deep, sophisticated, with gorgeous chord changes and an almost Brian Wilson-esque melancholy and grandeur – but also a touch of Harrisonian anger. The lyrics, inspired by anti-materialist Krishna teachings, might well contain a dig at John, Paul and their lawyers/managers, while those Weeping Atlas Cedar trees denote George's new preoccupation with gardens. Musicians include Ringo, Clapton, Bobby Whitlock and Dave Mason. *SS*

12

WITHIN YOU WITHOUT YOU

(from *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, 1967)

Homage, lecture, prayer. Great vocal, too.

Of the trilogy of Indian classical tracks George Harrison made as a Beatle, Within You Without You surpasses Love You To and The Inner Light mainly because it introduced the world to Raga Rock Proper – no exotic 'mergers' of sitar, tabla and standard 4/4 rhythm, as rock's other best-and-brightest then offered, but the real thing, without a single chord change, mesmerising. It opened side two of the most celebrated album of the '60s and was heard by nearly everybody. *DD*

11

STUCK INSIDE A CLOUD

(from *Brainwashed*, 2002)

When your own music becomes your final friend.

A song of valediction, an ailing man detailing his mental and physical isolation and his body's failings ("Never slept so little… lost my concentration… lost my will to eat… talking to myself…"). But gradually, you realise, this is also a song about the comforts of songwriting, the cloud in question both medical and musical. In the end, it's Harrison the philosopher admitting he has no answers, just music. The posthumous *All Things* embroidery from Jeff Lynne and Dhani Harrison confirms this beautifully. *AM*

10

IF I NEEDED SOMEONE

(from *Rubber Soul*, 1965)

A new kind of love song for a dawning new era.

Rubber Soul

If the fractal pulse of Ticket To Ride was the harbinger, here was the first *echt* psychedelic Beatles track. Harrison shoots a chiming 12-string riff he'd half-nicked off The Byrds through the prism of his spring '65 encounter with acid dentist John Riley and the vocal harmonies do the rest. A spirit of, if not exactly free love, then at least *laissez-faire*, imbues the lyric: George isn't interested in you *that way* right now, but he'll keep your offer in mind. Like, cheers. *DE*

9

I'D HAVE YOU ANYTIME

(from *All Things Must Pass*, 1970)

George and Bob drift into an exquisite union.

Harrison's 1968 visit with Dylan in Woodstock was initially awkward. When guitars came out, each was desirous of the other's strengths: George wanted lyrical insight, while Bob was interested in chord changes. After showing Dylan major seventh, diminished and augmented chords, Harrison wrote the opening couplet, "Let me in here/I know I've been here/Let me into your heart", as an invitation for Bob to loosen up. Dylan reciprocated with the bridge, ending with "I'd have you anytime." It's a song about seduction in a budding non-carnal friendship. *MSi*

8

TAXMAN

(from *Revolver*, 1966)

Whether rich man's whinge or anti-establishment snipe, it rocks.

Harrison would argue that his issues with the IR had as much to do with government spending (for instance, on defence) as Britain's 95% top rate *per se*. Meanwhile, his tirade is made more universal (and fun) by its wit ("If you take a walk, I'll tax your feet") and pneumatic riff attack, the perfect (ahem) Start to the new hipster universe that was *Revolver*. His lyric (abetted by Lennon) can be enjoyed anew in Junior Parker's leisurely, yet appalled 1970 cover ("…and this is *awful*…"). *DE*

7

HANDLE WITH CARE

(from *Traveling Wilburys Volume One*, 1988)

A song so great it formed the Traveling Wilburys.

This tale of love, loneliness and career exhaustion might have been a mere CD single B-side if Jeff Lynne hadn't suggested Roy Orbison sit in or they hadn't recorded at Bob Dylan's Malibu studio and invited Tom Petty along. Delivered solely by Harrison, the song's cataloguing of middle-aged rock-star woes ("Overexposed, commercialised") might have sounded like more sour grapes but with Harrison, Orbison, and Dylan sharing vocals it becomes a song of mutual support, of friendship, of famous men sharing their fears and failures together. *AM*

Bob Whitaker/Camera Press, Wolfgang Hellemann/Camera Press

Life and Times: The Beatles dress up in preparation for working like dogs, 1964; (above) George meets a Blue Meanie at a premiere of Yellow Submarine, July 8, 1968.

6 WHILE MY GUITAR GENTLY WEEPS

(from *The Beatles*, 1968)

The encapsulation of 1968's post-psychedelic heaviness.

A gorgeous minor-key dirge about human woe, initiated by the I Ching and the phrase "gently weeps" taken from a random book. The demo heard on *Anthology 3* contains the lines, "I look from the wings at the play you are staging/ While I'm sitting here doing nothing but ageing", implying more frustration with Harrison's sidelining in The Beatles. He invited Eric Clapton to play the keening lead guitar, betting on the others' best behaviour in front of company. The bet paid off. *MSi*

5 ALL THINGS MUST PASS

(from *All Things Must Pass*, 1970)

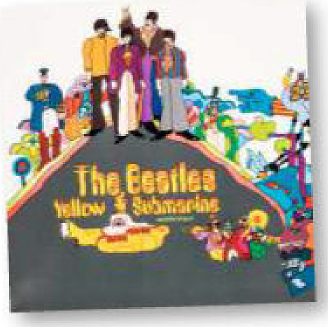
The Tao of George finds its purest expression.

How typical of its author's modesty that after having this song desultorily abandoned during *Get Back/Let It Be*, he should then insist that Billy Preston record and release it first. Written in awe of The Band and Timothy Leary's psychedelicised Taoism, for all the arrangement's simple majesty – Preston and Starr in resolute lockstep, Bobby Keys and Jim Price's stoned fanfare, Pete Drake's pedal steel sprinkling quicksilver magic – it's Harrison's seraphic vocal that ultimately turns the eternal lights on. He knew *ATMP* would be worth the wait. *KC*

4 IT'S ALL TOO MUCH

(from *Yellow Submarine*, 1969)

Psych-rock mayhem for the masses.

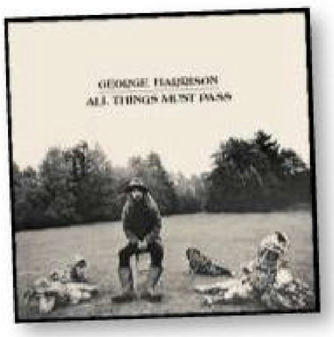


It was Harrison, not Lennon, who captained The Beatles' truest account of the LSD experience. Shelved for two years, this chaotic, self-produced, post-Pepper jam journeys from sun-bright euphoria (that Hammond reveille) to fuzz, clatter and collapse: the ragged group chant of "Tooo much" suggests people keen to get off the ride. The duel between acid-rock overload and cheery Pepperland trumpets epitomises English psychedelia's peculiar blend of transcendence and whimsy: "Show me that I'm everywhere and get me home for tea." *DL*

3 MY SWEET LORD

(from *All Things Must Pass*, 1970)

The mantra that took over the world.



It's thrilling from the first strum – five hands across 30 strings, what George called "one huge guitar." From there, it's one continuous mystical sound vibration, yearning upwards with ragged, beseeching vocals and harmonised slide electrics. By the fade, you're so blissed out you don't even realise you're singing "Hare Hare, Guru Vishnu." Fifty years on, we all accept the "subconscious plagiarism" verdict. But really, Harrison borrowed a few bricks from a pop song and built the Taj Mahal. *BDM*

2 HERE COMES THE SUN

(from *Abbey Road*, 1969)

The most-streamed Beatles song *for a reason*.

In the spring of '69, his bandmates at a business meeting, George bunked off to Eric Clapton's house. In his sunny Surrey garden on a borrowed guitar he wrote this, recording it with Paul and Ringo in July. Warm, mellow, optimistic, summery, everything about it – words, music, mood – is out of whack with the dark, moody Harrison who quit The Beatles (for a bit) in January. Note the Indian influence in its changing time signatures and meditative singalong mantra: "Sun, sun, sun, here it comes." *SS*

1 SOMETHING

(from *Abbey Road*, 1969)

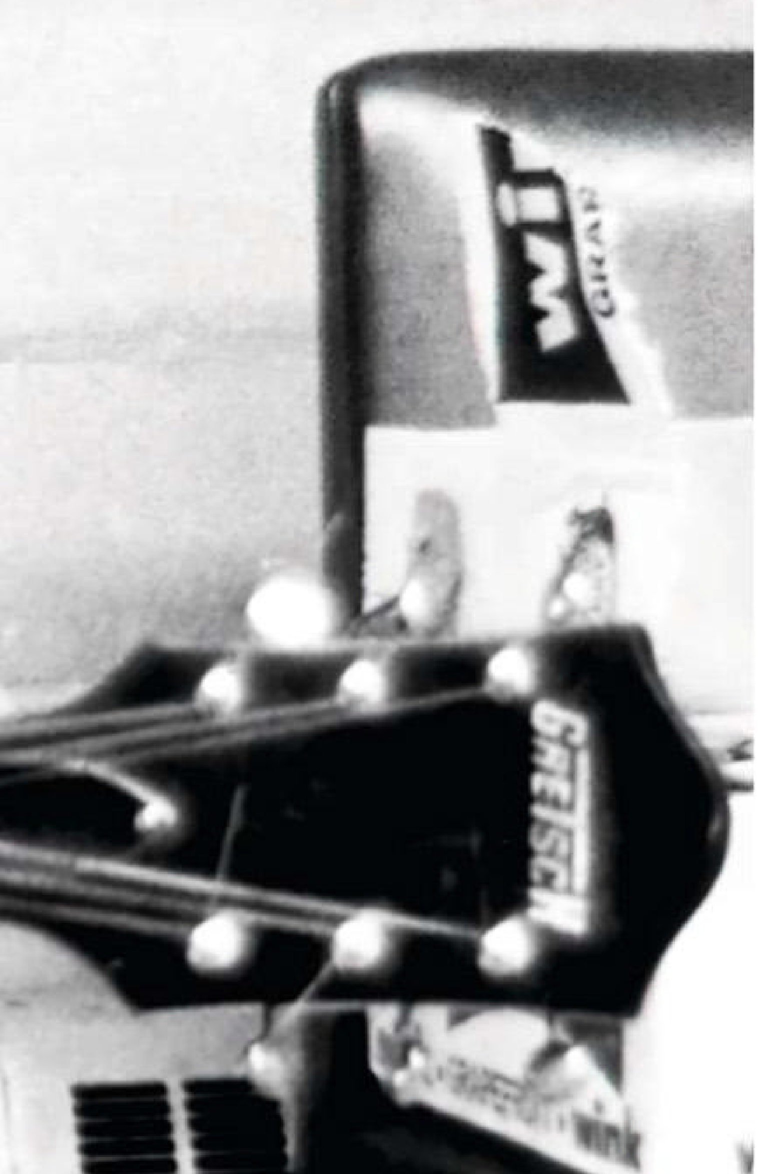
Ambiguity has never sounded so romantic.

Songwriters aim to express the inexpressible. George did something cleverer. He celebrated it. And by leaning on non-specific pronouns, his lyric struck a universal chord. Meanwhile, the music – "the nicest melody tune I've written," he said – plumbed deeper, further, speaking words of woo as it slid along a chord progression as hypnotic as Escher's staircase. This personal best was matched by Paul's on bass – a wildly freestyle line whose counter-melodies sound like hearts thumping in breathless anticipation. *BDM*

DARK HORSES

John Aizlewood, Keith Cameron, Bill DeMain, Dave DiMartino, Tom Doyle, Danny Eccleston, Pat Gilbert, Jim Irvin, Dorian Lynskey, Andrew Male, Jon Savage, Victoria Segal, Michael Simmons, Sylvie Simmons, Mat Snow.

John Launois/Camera Press, Getty



Northern soul: George Harrison backstage in 1965, working up a solo on his Gretsch Tennessean; (below) with Paul McCartney during The Beatles' 1966 US tour.

"HE DIDN'T SOUND LIKE ANY OTHER GUITARIST"

Never before printed in full, **PAUL McCARTNEY**'s words on the 10th anniversary of his bandmate's untimely death cut to the heart of the creative relationships in The Beatles. "George *always* brought something to *all* the songs," he told **MICHAEL SIMMONS**.

IN 2011, FOR A GEORGE HARRISON cover story around the release of Martin Scorsese's Living In The Material World documentary, Paul McCartney picked up the phone and spoke to MOJO at length. Since there was a lot of Harrison's life and career and an army of top interviewees to fit in, only a quote or two was used in the piece. Ten years later, with Harrison once again gracing the cover of MOJO, here at last is the director's cut of McCartney's chat with Michael Simmons…

Louise Harrison [George's sister] told me that their parents taught them to be trusting, and that when George was young, he was a very trusting person. She implied that it made him vulnerable. Does that ring true?

I would think of it more like loyal. Trusting? Mmm, I don't know. His elder sister would see him differently than his contemporary mates on the street would. So it depends what you're talking about. If it was charlatans, he would definitely not be trusting and he was quick to spot them. But he was a very loyal guy; anybody he liked he was very loyal to. (*Laughs*) But there were a lot of things he didn't trust. He was super-canny. He had an eye out for the fakes.

Years ago, John was quoted as saying that George was 'the kid' when The Beatles began and that John treated George as such. How long did that last?

It probably lasted a couple of years. Just because of his age, in a group of men who've grown up together, particularly roundabout their teenage years – age matters. In John's case, who was three years older than George – that meant a lot. John was probably a bit embarrassed at having sort of 'a young kid' around just 'cos that happens in a bunch of guys. It lasted for a little while. It was particularly noticeable when George got deported for being underage from Hamburg. Otherwise, when he first joined the group, he was a very fresh-faced looking kid. I remember introducing him to John and thinking, "Wow, there's a little bit of an age difference." It wasn't so much for me 'cos I was kind of in the middle. But as we grew up it ceased to make a difference. Those kind of differences iron themselves out.

What about George's process in the studio? Do you recall any moments where he brought something in or made a song click?

Oh yeah, sure. There were quite a few. I would think immediately of my song And I Love Her which I brought in pretty much as a finished song. But George put on do-do-do-dooo (*sings the signature riff*) which is *very much* a part of the song. Y'know, the opening riff. That, to me, made a stunning difference to the song and whenever I play the song now I remember the moment George came up with that little riff. We were quite collaborative in the studio so we might have worked it out together. From memory I just remember George pretty much throwing that in. That song would not be the same without it.

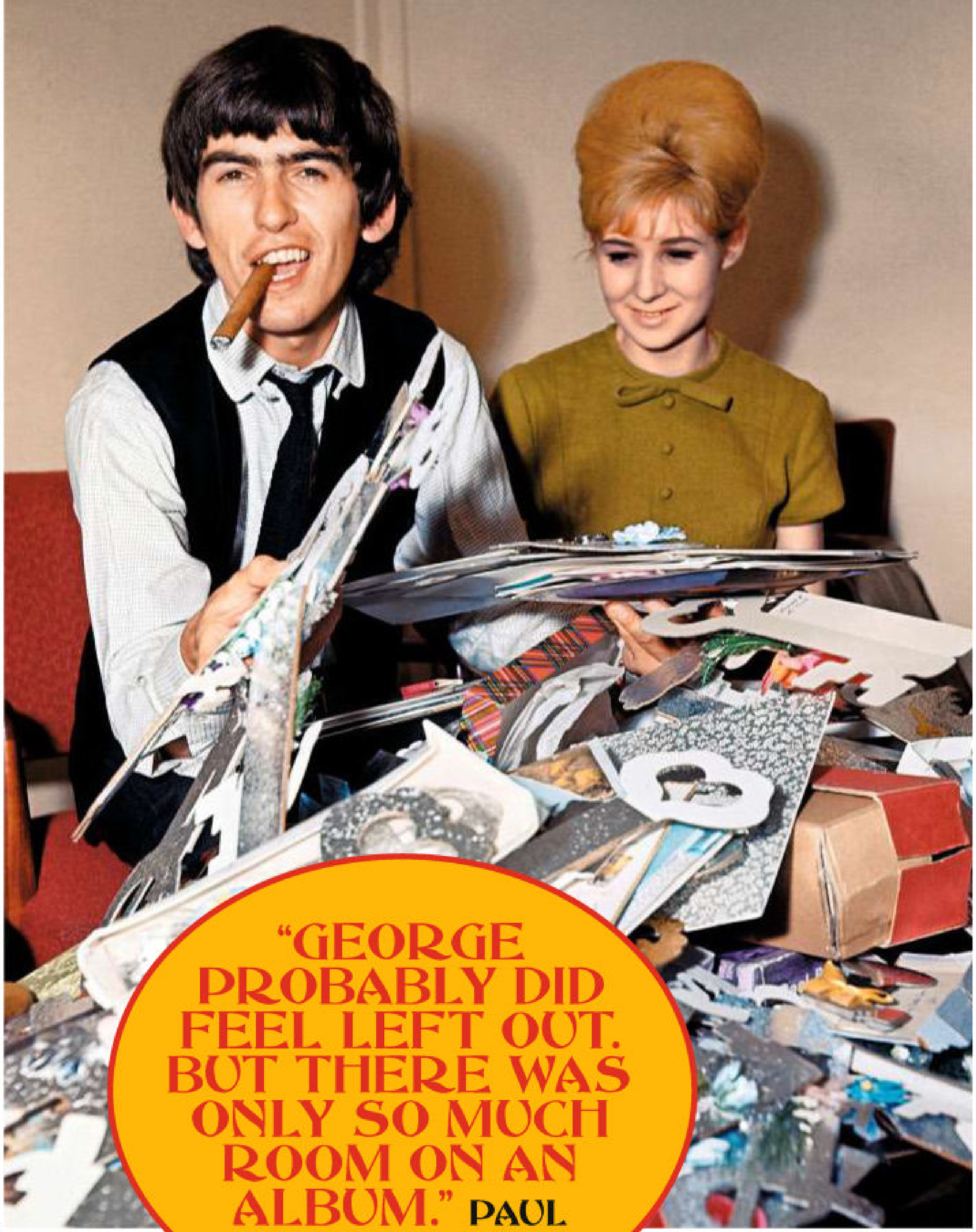
I think a lot of his solos were very distinctive and *made* the records. He didn't sound like any other guitarist. The very early days we were really kids and we didn't think at all professionally. We were just kids being led through this amazing wonderland of the music business. We didn't know how it went at all – a fact that I'm kind of glad of 'cos I think it meant that we made it up. So we ended up making things up that people then would later emulate rather than us emulating stuff that we'd been told.

In the very early days, it was pretty exciting. I remember going to auditions at Decca and each of us did pretty well, y'know. We were in a pub afterwards having a drink and kind of debriefing and coming down off the excitement, but we were still pretty high off it all. And I remember sitting at the bar with George and it became kind of a fun thing for us for years later, it was like, (*adopts awed voice*) "When you sang Take Good Care Of My Baby, it was *amazin'*, man!" I'm not sure we said "man" or even "amazing" in those days. But… that was a special little moment and it just became a sort of, (*awed voice again*) "When you sang Take Good Care Of My Baby…"

George played a classical nylon-string guitar on And I Love Her. I recall George getting into Andrés Segovia for a bit. Does that ring a bell?

I think 'for a bit' is the operative phrase. We fell in love with the guitar and we didn't discriminate. It could be a Spanish guitar, a classical guitar. ➢

Getty, Bb Bonis



The kid done good: the young George with his first guitar; (right) Harrison celebrating his 21st birthday, February 25, 1964, with Beatles fan club secretary Bettina Rose.

> "GEORGE PROBABLY DID FEEL LEFT OUT. BUT THERE WAS ONLY SO MUCH ROOM ON AN ALBUM." PAUL McCARTNEY

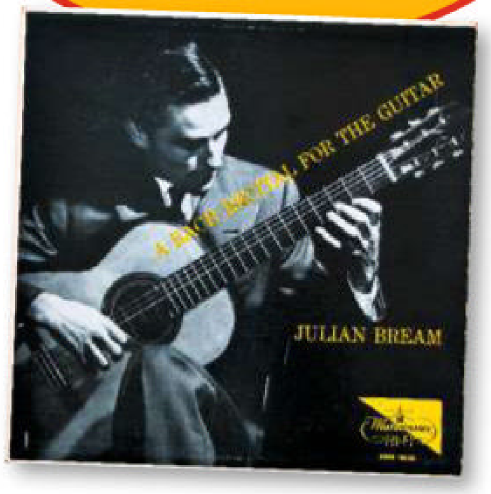
Mptvimages/Eyevine, Camera Press/ED/JM

It could be a Gretsch, a Fender, a Gibson. We kind of loved them all. It was like a dream, it was like walking through Santa's grotto. There was a great sense of wonder for us. I remember so clearly being at Pete Best's mother's club – the Casbah in West Derby in Liverpool – and George came in and he opened up this long, rectangular box. It turned out to be a guitar case. We wouldn't have guessed there was a guitar in there 'cos 'til then you hadn't seen these long rectangular cases which are now perfectly normal; we'd seen guitar-shaped cases. And he opened up this long box and in there was… I'm not sure if it was a Fender. I think it might have been a lookalike, a cheaper copy. But *man*, it looked *good*. It looked *so glorious*. Moments like that were very special. We were in love with *guitar*, of any kind.

George and I used to do this little thing, which is the J.S. Bach thing. I think it's called Fugue or something (*sings Bach's Bourrée in E minor*). We didn't know it all but we learned the first little bit. We made the end up. We didn't have the record, we just [played it] from memory. But somehow one of us had figured it. What we liked about it was that it was harder than some of the stuff we were playing, it was part of our development, 'cos it was two lines working against each other. You've got the melody (*sings*) and then you get a sort of (*sings*) bassline working against it.

I tell audiences now that was what gave me the start of Blackbird. It's not the same notes but I took the style of there being a bass melody and a treble melody in the same guitar piece and made up the song Blackbird from that. I clearly remember George and I used to sit around doing our own version of this Bach thing. It was like a little party piece, it was a little something to show that we weren't just (*adopts pompous voice*) *one-dimensional*. It was a little show-off thing.

The point I'm coming back to is that, yeah, we were aware of classical guitar players. I was a big fan of Julian Bream – and I think George was too – who was a British classical guitarist. We used anything we could get our hands on for ideas, so for instance – me – that kind of thing would lead to Blackbird.



The other very influential piece is a piece by Chet Atkins that we tried to learn called Trambone – trombone with an 'a'. That is a nice little bit of country picking. And that's the same thing – there's two things going on. You got a bassline and the treble line. None of us quite mastered that except a guy called Colin [Manley] out of the Remo Four. For us that was the high spot of their act when Colin just did this instrumental. But the point I'm making is that all these lovely little things were little turn-ons and we assimilated them all into our music. So we definitely weren't snobs.

There's something I've been curious about for 45 years. On And Your Bird Can Sing, is that you or George playing the guitar riff?

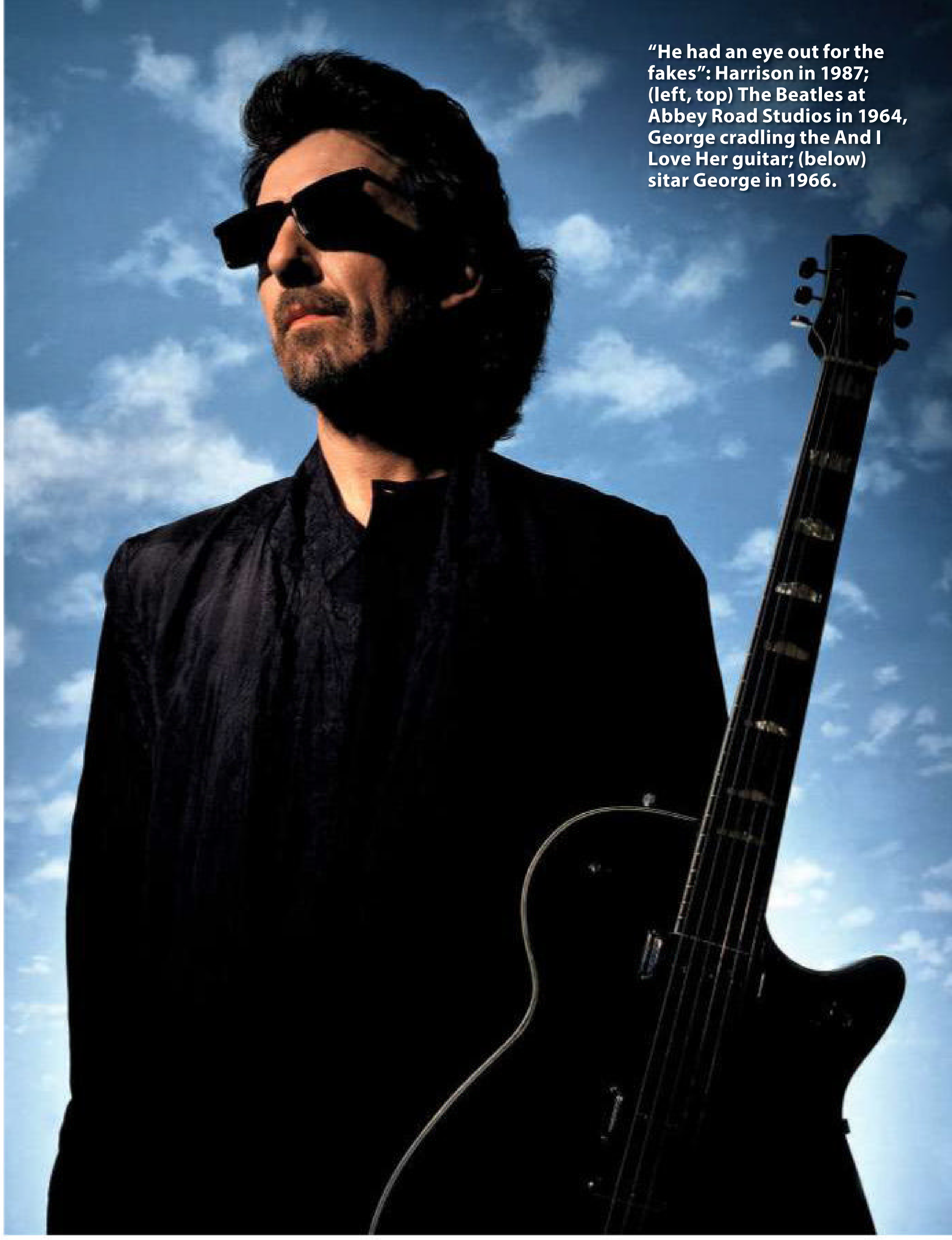
I think it's me *and* George playing in harmony. That was one of the things we used to do. It's a harmony riff. I remember talking to Rusty [Anderson], my guitar player. He'd go, "Ahhh, *that's* how you do it!" George and I would work out a melody line, then I would work out the harmony to it. So we'd do it as a piece. And Your Bird Can Sing – that's what that is. That's me and George both playing electric guitars. It's just the two of us live. It's a lot easier to do with two people, believe me. It's another one of our little tricks!

Any other moments where George really brought something to the song?

I think George *always* brought something to *all* the songs. Just that one comes to mind. I'd have to sit down, listen to the tracks and go, "Ah, there's a George moment." The great thing is that me, George and John originally had a little set-up with just the three of us on three guitars. That was our first kinda little incarnation. And we would go to talent shows and lose them with that line-up (*chuckles*). So what I mean is any of us could take the guitar parts. So, for instance, I Feel Fine was John's riff and started off by him leaning the guitar inadvertently against an amp and it fed back so we used that into the (*sings the opening riff*). But often opening riffs – certainly solos – would be George. I could go through 'em all and just say, "That's George, that's George, that's George." 'Cos I was there you know (*chuckles*).

So I hear.

Would it be 10 years since his passing? I cannot *believe* that. 'Cos how long have I known him? What, 50 years, I think? Having met George on a bus where he *really* was a little schoolkid, accentuated by the fact we both had little school uniforms on. And coming through all of that and being mates on the bus and finding we had a love of guitars in common, introducing him to John on the top deck of a double-decker bus, him playing [Bill Justis's] Raunchy. And then him



"He had an eye out for the fakes": Harrison in 1987; (left, top) The Beatles at Abbey Road Studios in 1964, George cradling the And I Love Her guitar; (below) sitar George in 1966.

getting in the group, going out to Hamburg, honing our style and the material that we would later do on our first album. And then later, y'know, just keeping on developing. It's fabulous 'cos I think one of the real interesting things about our story is that we did keep on moving. We didn't just stay in one style. The Beatles albums are *amazingly* sort of varied; they just keep going. And of course George was a huge part of that. We could swap onto guitars so I could play some stuff occasionally. But it would normally work out, y'know, that if I had an idea for something I would tell it to George and he would pretty much play it. Or if John had an idea then George being the lead guitarist would play it. Or we individually would just do it 'cos it was quicker. We could mix and match. But most of the guitar signature sound is George.

Of George's compositions, which is the first one that knocked you out?

He never brought anything to the studio until Don't Bother Me and we thought, "Wow, that's really good," 'cos it had been John and I writing stuff. So I thought that was really good. Later, when he brought If I Needed Something…

If I Needed Someone.

If I Needed Someone. Yeah, Something's another one. I've melded 'em (*laughs*). I thought that was a landmark. I think then Something and Here Comes The Sun – he'd gone right up there and was now a top standard writer.

Did George's increasing songwriting output by *The White Album* contribute to his unhappiness with The Beatles?

Yeah, possibly. I remember him talking about *All Things Must Pass* as diarrhoea. That was his own affectionate way of describing that he'd had a lot of stuff stored up and it had to come out. I mean I don't think I'd describe it like that (*laughs*). But I know what he meant. He now was writing furiously – great things, like Isn't It A Pity. Some of them made it with us. Within You Without You is like completely landmark, I would say, in Western recording. Norwegian Wood – the sitar on that. They were definitely *huge* influences in Western music. Inner Light is a *beautiful* song. I think ol' Jeff Lynne did a really good job on it on the [2002 tribute show] Concert For George.

George probably did feel left out. But there was only so much room on an album. You gotta remember we made albums that were only 40 minutes long. And John and I were writin' some… (*pauses*) …good stuff. And Ringo had to have a track; we'd always try and include a Ringo track. So it didn't leave as much room for George as perhaps he would've liked but then he went on to record it all himself.

But you know, you can't have everything. It was The Beatles' career and for each of us to have been in The Beatles was pretty amazing and pretty cool. If it didn't work out how each individual would've wanted it to, then it's… (*pauses*) …it's just too bad really because what happened was so good. I think what George did within The Beatles was phenomenal, so I think you kinda have to leave it there.

The bickering doesn't matter at the end of the day, does it?

No. You know I remember having an argument with a member of my family, one of my kids once, in front of someone. And it was a bit, "Oh my God, what's going on here?" It was embarrassing but we both had a fairly strong point of view about something. And I was brought down by it – we both were. A friend of mine said, "Y'know what Paul, it proves you're a family." It proves you're a real family. And that's the truth about The Beatles. You have to look at it like that. We each had very strong opinions. If you look at us individually, I mean c'mon – give it up. John Lennon. Paul McCartney. George Harrison, Ringo Starr. You look at us all individually – that's a bunch of talent in a room. And a bunch of egos. So they're not just gonna get on like apple pie. There is going to be the odd argument – and there *were*. Sometimes they were minor about, y'know, turning up guitars (*laughs*). George and John were very cute because they both had their amps side by side and you'd see one of them just sort of sneak over to the amplifiers, just add *one* degree and then you'd see him walk back like nothing had happened. And then you'd see John had noticed and John would casually walk over and put his up *two* degrees. (*Laughs*) "You've fucking turned up man!" "*What? I never did!*" "Yeah you fucking did!" So there's all *that* and then there was more serious things towards the end which were basically business things. And of course I had the ultimate bad role of having to save everyone from the wolf. That led to all sorts of unpleasant arguments and things.

I'm assuming that's Allen Klein.

Yeah, yeah. He's not with us any more so I try not to walk on the dead man's grave. But it was the truth and everyone knows it. We had to be saved and unfortunately it fell to me. But I think it was the right thing. The current success of The Beatles has proved that. We wouldn't have anywhere *near* the amount of control we have now. Rather like The Rolling Stones don't. On *Hot Rocks*. Which they don't own. (*Laughs*) We were headed that way. So that caused a lot of unpleasantness. But as I say, it proved we were a family.

But hey I gotta go. And I'll just leave you with this note (*plays a note on a flute*).

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EDITED BY **JENNY BULLEY** jenny.bulley@bauermedia.co.uk

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Cracked Actor

Who will the New Zealand shapeshifter channel this time? Bowie? P.J.? Neil? **Tom Doyle** marvels at a singer of many voices. Illustration: **Vince Pastiche**.

Aldous Harding

★★★★

Warm Chris

4AD. CD/DL/LP

"It's clearly empowering for Aldous Harding to adopt these personae."

"YOU KNOW people that I've been," sings Aldous Harding in a close-up whisper, eight tracks into her fourth album, amid the floaty, light acoustic '60s pop arrangement of Staring At The Henry Moore. It's likely a statement for a friend or intimate, but it might just as easily be one directed at us, the listeners to her songs, which typically feature a diverse cast of vocal characters. Slipping into the lineage of Tom Waits, (particularly Berlin trilogy-era) David Bowie and P.J. Harvey, Harding assumes the position of singer-as-actor, often sounding like not the same vocalist – or even the same person – within the space of two consecutive performances.

It's clearly empowering for Aldous Harding to adopt this air of theatricality and these personae, not least the one of Aldous Harding herself. New Zealand-born Hannah Topp has admitted that, since beginning to operate as Harding in 2014, she's grown increasingly wary of her creation. "I trust myself musically," she told MOJO 306, "but I'm not sure I trust the woman who's taken on this thing. I think there's moments of clear fragility."

Some of that vulnerability was evident in the more personal-sounding lines on her brilliant third album, 2019's *Designer*, particularly in the weary bossa nova of Weight Of The Planets: "You're lost and it's sucking you out." Here, however, in the opening track of its successor, to the accompaniment of her percussive, chopsticks-style piano part, she comes across as determined not to be tossed around by emotional turmoil. Ennui, she airily declares, "can see no point to send to me".

Eight years on from the stark gothic folk of her self-titled debut album, Harding in fact sounds light years away from the tremulous-voiced individual who sang of finding "no peace at all". "Oh the dirty of it/Ripped the label," she mischievously growls in Tick Tock, in the bassy, tarry tones of Lou Reed. It's testament to her actorly chops throughout that, sometimes in the same song, her voice glides along the gender spectrum: Vashti Bunyan one minute, John Cale the next.

In her early songs Harding often sounded mysteriously Welsh, and then fulfilled that sense of predestiny by actually moving to Wales. *Warm Chris* is her second album recorded in her chosen homeland and her third produced by long-standing P.J. Harvey collaborator John Parish. It was made, like *Designer*, at the rural Rockfield Studios in Monmouthshire (setting for landmark recordings by such disparate acts as Queen, Hawkwind and Oasis), where Parish played guitar, keyboards and drums, and marshalled Harding and a great band comprising multi-instrumentalist Huw Evans, AKA H. Hawkline, adaptable horn-player Gavin Fitzjohn and former Sons Of Kemet drummer Seb Rochford. The result is minimal, precise arrangements rendered in a warm, '70s hi-fi production.

On first listen, *Warm Chris* is less obviously immediate than *Designer*, though the songs don't take long to worm their way into the mind. The album's skittish first single Lawn – vocal style: Harding as wide-eyed English ingénue – isn't typical of the rest of the record, but its flashes of lyrical humour are. "Time flies when you're writing B-sides," she trills, whether digging at herself or A.N. Other.

Harding tells MOJO (*see Q&A page 80*) that she was far more interested in the sound of words than their meaning on this album, but she's clearly having a lot of fun here, seemingly drifting into incoherent Geordie-speak in Ennui ("No 'one look' and a canny fucking fill") or making vague, weird promises in Leathery Whip ("I'll be all day getting the velvet back to you, Bambi").

If there's one track in which we might get a glimpse of the "real" Harding, or perhaps even Hannah Topp (much as we probably did in her 2017 breakthrough single, Imagining My Man), it's the slinky, staccato-grooved Fever. Although she stays pretty much in Nico mode, there are moments when we can almost hear Harding break character, as she relates a fractured narrative that takes place in an atmosphere of heat haze and smoke and complicated feelings. She meets someone in a hotel reception, they spend 11 days together in a hot city, but still she can't help staring at her lover in the dark, "looking for that thrill in the nothing".

Romantic entanglements return in Passion Babe, where Harding's accent seems to travel north to some indeterminate point in Scandinavia, and she plays the drawling, jaded wife: "Well, you know I married/And I was bored out of my mind". Her push-me-pull-me delivery is light-hearted and excellently entertaining, but it also underlines the exactness of her vocal parts throughout. Here is a singer who as soon as she opens her mouth is very much focused and in the moment.

Harding's most surprising vocal on *Warm Chris* comes with piano ballad She'll Be Coming Round The Mountain, where she's uncannily possessed by the aching-voiced Neil Young of Helpless or After The Gold Rush. Partway through, H. Hawkline's broken-sounding banjo arrives to accompany the piano arpeggios and the hauntingly lonesome country effect is fully realised.

At the other end of the scale, Harding turns time-weathered bluesman in the chorus of closer Leathery Whip (theme: life as a lash-wielding punisher) as a second, male voice joins her in the left speaker, mimicking her swampy southern American tones. Staggeringly, it turns out to belong to none other than Sleaford Mods' Jason Williamson. Factor in Harding's own helium-high interjections and it's all in all brilliantly daft and darkly cartoonish.

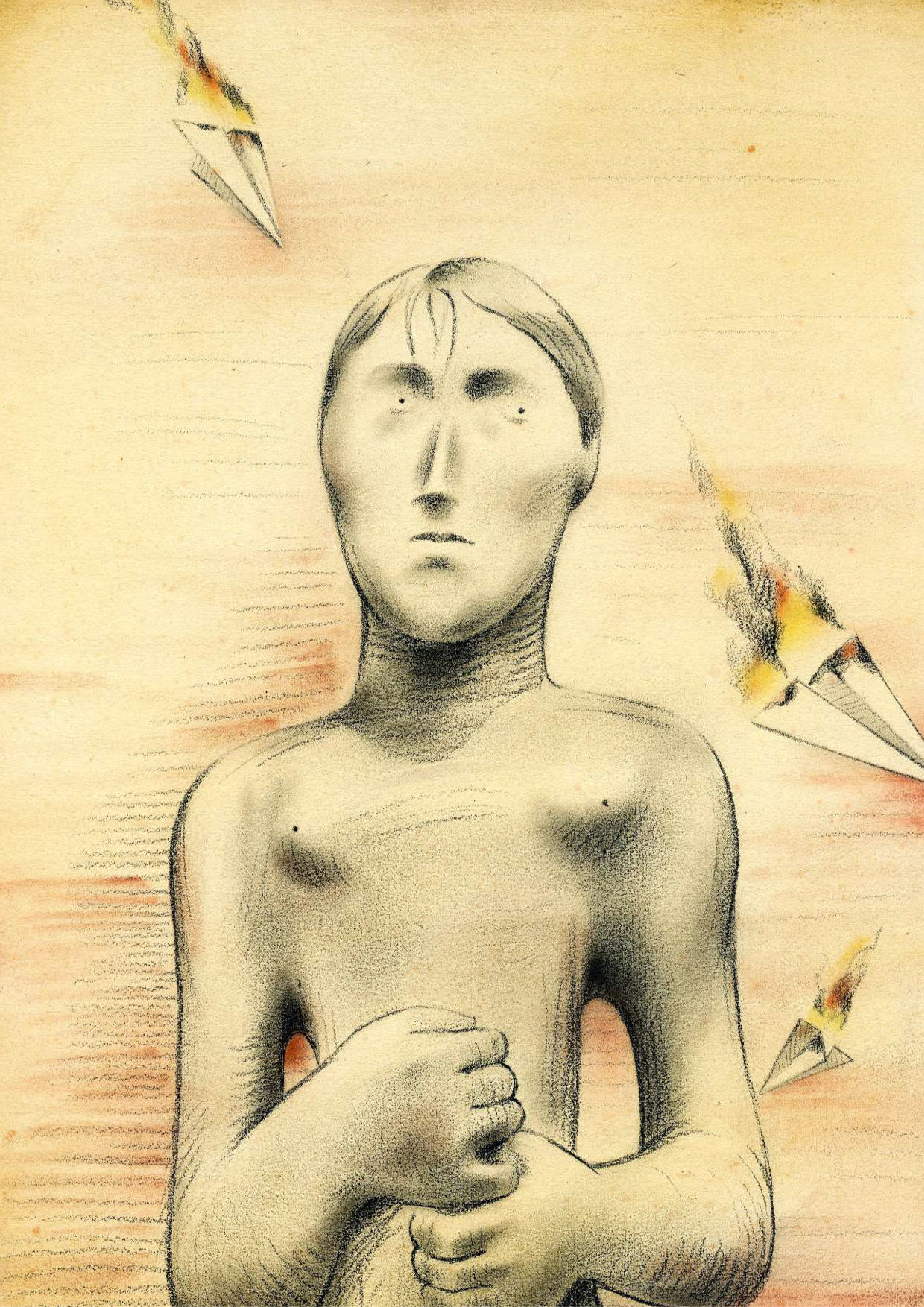
If, for some, Harding's modus operandi might sound a bit like a deep dive into the dress-up box, and perhaps a tad inauthentic, then her sheer, method actor-like intensity snuffs out that argument, along with the revealing glimpses of raw emotion. In the second verse of Leathery Whip, she makes a plea – "Baby go lightly/I feel me tightening up" – and you can hear Topp more cautiously pulling Harding's strings. Ultimately, though, as with all things Aldous Harding, it's a dazzling performance. Expect the ovations for her to echo down the years.

ALDOUS SPEAKS! HARDING ON MINIMALISM, GHOSTS & SLEAFORD MODS.

Michelle Henning

BACK STORY: OF THIS PARISH

- As a producer, John Parish's (above) recent credits include Dry Cleaning and The Goon Sax, but his three-album association with Aldous Harding is clearly a creatively fruitful one, mirroring in some ways his 34-year-long, on-off working relationship with P.J. Harvey. "John has the strange gift of recognising a song's essence," Harding tells MOJO. "Like a nameless sense. He's never told me what that's like for him. I feel our relationship, one of the most important in my life, has been built on a silent communication between our individual gifts. He may disagree, which… would be perfect."



All wrapped up: Aldous Harding focused on "pure phonics" for her fourth LP.

"I went back and forth with the visions."

Aldous Harding speaks to **Tom Doyle.**

What was your general approach to writing these new songs? Were they written in an intensive burst in one place or in fits and starts in different places?

"I think of my songs as deep secrets the muse has been keeping from me. Writing feels more like reading. A lot of it is done in silence. Winning a 'good song' comes secondary to spending time with the person doing me [the] favour of making it. I focused on pure phonics more than any other record. I needed the sound, not the meaning of the word to stand alone as a poem against its backgrounds. Sound alone as poems. So, instead of trying to show the universe in a lyric, letting the sound of the instruments decide them for me."

The arrangements on *Warm Chris* are very minimalist. Do you abhor sonic clutter?

"I'm dubious about anything beyond my own voice and my instrument. I'm absolutely brave enough to release the phone recordings as they are but sadly not stupid enough. It can be hard to watch them grow past my own limitations. Like watching someone out-parent you in front of your children, in front of yourself. John Parish will confirm this. I almost went swirling into the drum kit when he suggested the beautiful electric guitar you hear on Imagining My Man [on 2017's *Party*]. I'm also biased towards layers so… who knows."

You seem to deliver each song as a different character. How do you decide upon and develop each voice?

"From what I can make out it comes from deep in the references. Remembering too that there are more individual voices than words in my memory. I try to stay with the voice once I've started, unless I or John think I might be in trouble."

Any recurring lyrical themes for you on the album?

"I won't go back and read through them!"

You returned to Rockfield Studios in Wales for this record. Why do you like it there, and does the history of the many great albums made there add to the appeal?

"Of course. I laugh when I hear about the things those halls have seen. I find it impressively modest in every way but its history. It's one of my favourite places on earth. It feels like stepping onto a ship. Mostly I'm occupied with taking my own modest steps so there's not a lot of time to talk to the ghosts of the greats!"

There's a lot of reptilian imagery in the video for Lawn, and a photo of a tortoise in the artwork. What's the attraction?

"A select few became an integral part of the record for reasons unknown to me. I went back and forth with the vision until finally I gave in. It was decided in bed at my mother's house."

Your vocal on She'll Be Coming Round The Mountain sounds Neil Young-esque. Was that intentional?

"Not intentional – more necessary. I couldn't have started or finished that song without those records."

Jason Williamson is unrecognisable on Leathery Whip. Why did you decide he was the man for the job?

"I saw him play at Panama Festival [in Tasmania] and was taken by his poetic ability and physicality. We talked for a few minutes, and I walked away already writing him an e-mail in my head."

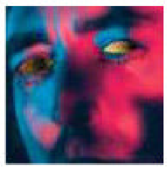
A Place To Bury Strangers

★★★★

See Through You

DEDSTRANGE. DL/LP

Real-deal NYC noise-pop three-piece remain untamed.



Where nu-gaze is often far too eager to please, offering but a timid approximation of the original turn-of-the-'90s shoegazers, APTBS always feel like the genuine article. Sole mainstay Oliver Ackermann, who tellingly also works as an FX pedal architect, clearly understands that to make a feedback-pop omelette, many eggs have to meet a brutal demise. His sixth album in 20 years unveils an umpteenth rhythm section, but presents a wholly unsanitised vision, where screeching white noise guitars eclipse thundering beats in a reverb dungeon far from prissy 'Health & Safety' regulation. While Ackermann audibly still hasn't recovered from hearing the JAMC's late-'80s B-sides darkest *Barbed Wire Kisses* (see Let's See Each Other, etc), and Hold On Tight even mirrors Sidewalking's pedestrian-in-rain outsider imagery, fabulous shafts of light shoot in late on, as beachy I Don't Know How You Do It and New Order-esque Love Reaches Out conclude with unforeseen blue-sky optimism.

Andrew Perry

The Boo Radleys

★★★

Keep On With Falling

BOOSTR. CD/DL/LP

Former shoegazers' first new LP since 1998.

Though absent original guitarist and chief songwriter Martin Carr is still flying solo, Boo Radleys frontman Simon 'Sice' Rowbottom, bassist Tim Brown and drummer Rob Cieka re-awoke Boo last summer. Exploring euthanasia and alcoholism, their 2021 EP A Full Syringe And Memories Of You broke new thematic ground, with the trademark ebullience that once made the Boos ubiquitous on breakfast-time radio largely absent. Melodically, at least, *Keep On With Falling* lets the sunshine back in, its bright melodies, glockenspiel glints and occasional reggae and ska motifs warming, even if the title track is a disavowal of religion, and the (bad) Karma Police-like I Can't Be What You Want Me To Be details a stalled relationship. Great that they are back on their own label, on their own terms, but some of these "democratically produced" recordings want for a ruthless arbitrator.

James McNair

Guided By Voices

★★★★

Crystal Nuns Cathedral

GBV INC. CD/DL/LP

Ninth album in three years, 12 songs in 38 minutes… but it's a good 'un!

Robert Pollard's troop, unlike post-millennial garage-rockers Osees and Ty Segall, have rarely deviated far from their original script, bashing out neo-classical punk-pop-rock, often at the lower end of the audio fidelity spectrum. Post-2012 re-formation productivity has only intensified lately: where last year's *Earth Man Blues* and *It's Not Them…* gloriously nailed GBV's rapid-fire gem-shower brief, *CNC* eases towards more sophisticated, thought-out, and unabashedly epic song construction. Given Pollard's Who fixation, it's less *Meaty, Beaty…*, more *Quadrophenia*, administered by a firing line-up featuring ace guitarists Doug Gillard and Bobby Bare Jr., who magisterially navigate Re-Develop's crunchy time signature, Birds In The Pipe's psychedelic eccentricity and Excited Ones' transition from two-chord bop-along to wonkily exploratory bridge. Expertly interwoven orchestration on smouldering opener Eye City and Climbing A Ramp doesn't stop the rock, but actually boosts its authoritative power. Thirty-five albums in, incredibly, GBV are still scaling new heights.

Andrew Perry

Loop

★★★★

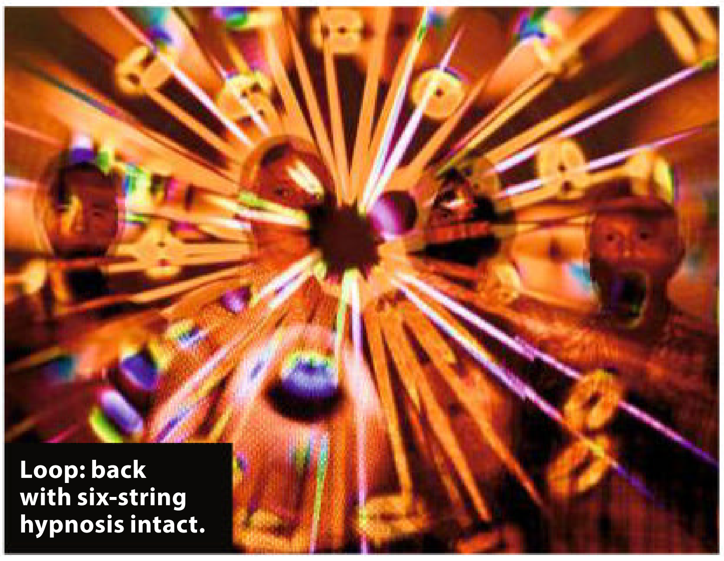
Sonancy

COOKING VINYL. CD/DL/LP

London late-'80s space-rockers' first full earth mission in 32 years.

When opener Interference riffs on one crunching chord for 57 seconds, then briefly diverts to a second, only to return to the first again (a pattern sustained for four mesmerising minutes), it's clear that Robert Hampson's newly-staffed Loop will not be deviating from their original minimalist logic. After 1990's valedictory *A Gilded Eternity*, Hampson, both as Main and under his own name, relinquished guitars in favour of synth drones and *musique concrète*, so this much-delayed fourth outing marks a hearty resumption of six-string hypnosis, superbly underpinned by a rhythm section (loaned from Bristolian cadets The Heads) battering out beats variously inspired by Kraut-y motorik (Eolian; Fermion), and on brain-busters Supra, Halo and Aurora, post-punk invention *à la* Bunnymen and Killing Joke. With most cuts clocking in under five minutes, *Sonancy*'s austere precision carries right through to its auteur's Chrome-esque robo voicing. Rarely has measured maturity led to such aurally altered states.

Andrew Perry



Loop: back with six-string hypnosis intact.

Swamp Dogg

★★★

I Need A Job… So I Can Buy More Auto-Tune

DON GIOVANNI. CD/DL/LP

Cult soul man's gazillionth genre-bending album.

It seems 79-year-old iconoclast Swamp Dogg has finally been caught in a Catch 22. Obviously, a follow-up to 2018's *Love, Loss And Auto-Tune*, so many of these new songs are drenched in the pitch-altering software that it's impossible to know whether his fixation is born of despair or fascination. Like the later-life albums of many artists, the worldly experience Dogg brings to love ballad Soul To Blessed Soul and other tracks gives them a moral weight that can't be faked. From the deep soul of She Got That Fire to I Need Your Body's freaky funk, Dogg runs the gamut of his career, and if it wasn't for a heavy hand on the pitch button, Cheating All Over Again could be as great as Curtis Mayfield's final recordings. Too often, however, it's just too hard to get past that artificially wobbly voice.

Andy Fyfe

Shiver and shake

Johnny Marr: he gives us *Fever…* – and quite a lot of it.

It's back to the future for the ex-Smith on an epic adventure into the dark nooks of his psyche. By **Pat Gilbert.**

JOHNNY MARR
FEVER DREAMS PTS 1-4

Johnny Marr

★★★★

Fever Dreams Pts 1-4

BMG. CD/DL/LP

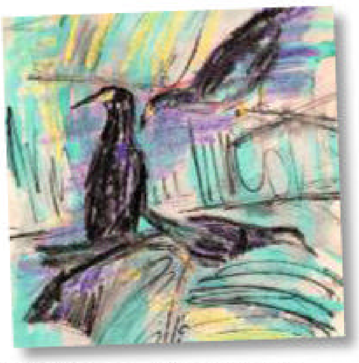
TOWARDS THE end of the writing process for *Fever Dreams Pts 1-4*, Johnny Marr was struggling with a song idea but couldn't nail it: it was too mannered, too indirect. He began thinking of songwriters who wrote, unmediated, from their heart, and he came up with two names: Bob Marley and John Lennon. Understandably feeling he couldn't credibly "pull off" a Tuff Gong vibe, he instead transported himself into a Lennon mindset, and out flowed a composition called Human, a stirring acoustic meditation – before swelling into a glistening darkwave behemoth – that opened up about the pain that he, and we, so often disguise from the world. Later that day, with mind-bending synchronicity, a package from none other than Yoko Ono turned up at his house containing 2021's *Plastic Ono Band* remaster. "A sign if ever there was one," he notes.

If we are going to take *Fever Dreams'* title literally, then Human, the closing track, represents the delirium finally passing after over 70 minutes of otherwise full-on, ultra-modern electro-rock. Conceived to reflect the inward journey that Marr experienced during Covid lockdowns, here sequencers, doomy synths and strident dancefloor beats boldly augment the angular post-punk guitar sounds of his three 2010s albums – *The Messenger*, *Playland* and *Call The Comet* – as Johnny explores an unsettling interior universe.

In the best traditions of English psychedelia – and the hypnagogic, immersive feel of this album certainly justifies that description – childhood and memory play a strong part in the hallucinogenic narratives, not least in the eerie spoken-word intro to Rubicon ("Just to understand like a child/All the pictures in your mind…") and in feisty fuzz-rocker Tenement Time's evocations of Marr running wild as a boy in Manchester's inner-city slums.

Musically, too, you'll detect subtle echoes of the guitarist's past, from opener Spirit, Power And Soul sounding a little like Johnny's teenage guitar tutor Billy Duffy (of Cult renown) chiming, goth-like, over a Dead Or Alive track, to the punchy Receiver attacking at disco tempo the icy melody of Joy Division's A Means To An End. Counter-Clock World – taking lockdown's temporal weirdness as its theme – skitters along cheekily, like a lost '80s Pete Shelley solo track.

Perhaps the greatest advance of *Fever Dreams* – whose sonic grandeur, it's tempting to think, links to Marr's work with Hans Zimmer on the latest Bond soundtrack – is the guitarist's voice, now matured into a wise, reassuring and increasingly characterful baritone. But – and it's a big 'but' – while tracks like The Whirl, Receiver, Sensory Street and Human are among Marr's most impressive, *Fever Dreams* is too long, uniform and persistent to enjoy in one sitting. Perhaps best, then, to take your time and discover its sparkling delirium in its 4 x 12-inch singles form.



Carson McHone

★★★★

Still Life

LOOSE. CD/DL/LP

Third LP makes good on early promise, and then some.

For five years Austin's Carson McHone has been a staple of 'ones to watch' New Year predictors, her country-tinged songs touching emotions rarely available to other songwriters. On 2019's *Carousel* McHone hinted that she had far wider musical ambitions, but it barely forewarned of the wonders revealed here. The album leaps from popping Southern soul horns and greasy sax to poignant piano balladry, discordant psychedelic guitar or, on the startlingly spartan closing track, Tried, just a single guitar string plucked with slowly building ferocity, while McHone pours her heart out about cancelled promises, poor choices (hers and others), emotional ambushes and sweet surrender. The touchstone influences – Aimee Mann, Frazey Ford, Ann Peebles – barely begin to scratch the surface of the musical depths McHone mines on *Still Life*, which finally moves her on from being just 'one to watch' to the woman of the moment.

Andy Fyfe

Deserta

★★★★

Every Moment, Everything You Need

FELTE. CD/DL/LP

Former Father John Misty collaborator's second dose of shoegazey drama.

Shoegazers typically promote FX-loaded guitars over standout vocals and lyrics, but Matthew Doty is a noisemaker with a need to communicate. His one-man battalion (voice, guitars, keys, programmed beats) outsizes even the likes of Slowdive, Sigur Rós and Mogwai, but if the opening title Lost In The Weight is one translation of the genre, knowing Doty's particular backstory shines a whole different light on his words. Deserta's 2020 debut, *Black Aura My Sun,* was inspired by impending fatherhood, but as a healthcare worker by day as well as father and musician, 2020 over-delivered to the point that *Every Moment…* is surely the first shoegaze album with PTSD. Its sound reflects the galaxies above yet the likes of I'm So Tired and Far From Over document reality on the ground, a gripping tour de force on different levels.

Martin Aston

Gang Of Youths

★★

Angel In Realtime

WARNER. CD/DL/LP

Aussie transplant five-piece overcook things at their Hackney studio.

Massive back in their native Sydney, Australia, Gang Of Youths moved to Angel, north London in 2017. With its sampled use of Pacific Island choir recordings that the English musicologist David Fanshawe feared would be lost to colonialism, the band's dense, synth-heavy third album has an awful lot going on. Largely concerned with the passing of their part-Samoan frontman David Le'aupepe's father Teleso, and part-coloured by the Christian megachurch milieu in which Gang Of Youths was formed, the record's well-meaning earnestness is a little overwhelming, but it's the stuffed-crust arrangements that really grate, everything happening at once, and often for too long. Nine songs in, Brothers, just piano and vocal, disinters one of the perfectly decent compositions that are bricked-in elsewhere, Le'aupepe singing movingly of the brothers he never knew he had until his father's passing.

James McNair

Davey Johnstone Band

★★★

Deeper Than My Roots

CHERRY RED. CD/DL

First solo album in 49 years from Elton John's guitarist and musical director.

A veteran of over 3,000 shows with Elton John, Davey Johnstone's solo career has been on hold since 1973's winsome *Smiling Face*. All these years later, the 70-year-old Scot has taken advantage of John's farewell tour's postponements to have another go. Although John's drummer Nigel Olsson guests on Melting Snow, it's a family affair: Johnstone's 16-year-old son Elliot sings most of the songs, three other sons play and a daughter designed the cover. For all the occasionally clunky lyrics ("I realise that we are climbing the rungs of love"), it's an overwhelmingly good-natured, echo-swamped affair packed with dreamy harmonies and languid arrangements which suggest Jack Johnson as much as David Crosby. There's a tasteful take on Here, There & Everywhere, but Boxer In The Corner rocks surprisingly hard, while instrumentals Walt Dizney [sic] and the sitar-and-synthesizer infused Black Scotland pack quite the punch.

John Aizlewood

Deeper Than My Roots

Hope amid the daily grind: King Hannah's Craig Whittle (left) and Hannah Merrick.

Come as you are

Liverpool duo nail their true colours to the mast. By Victoria Segal.

King Hannah

★★★★

I'm Not Sorry, I Was Just Being Me

CITY SLANG. CD/DL/LP

THERE'S SOMETHING very touching about It's Me And You, Kid, the final track on King Hannah's debut album. A love song to the band and bond that singer Hannah Merrick and guitarist Craig Whittle forged after working shifts together in a "gross bar" in Liverpool, it's a statement of hope in the face of daily grind, a bold declaration that King Hannah is now their place in the world. "We're doing it so that we can live our whole lives just doing this," sings Merrick over rangy, diffuse Pixies guitars, before setting off a chant of, "I'm all I'm ever going to be."

King Hannah might be the band least likely to be retraining in cyber any time soon: from the title down, *I'm Not Sorry, I Was Just Being Me* is a record committed to building its own wraparound world, a '90s mood indigo inspired by Portishead, Mazzy Star and P.J. Harvey right down by the water. There are shades, too, of shoegazing, alt-country and the crepe-soled, Cave-haired school of imaginary film soundtracks.

Merrick's smoke-ring vocals (Whittle noticed her at a student music night long before they were brought together by the service industry) rarely become agitated; the lyrics are unforced, unadorned, conversational to the point of artlessness. "When I was a kid/I wet the bed," she sings on All Being Fine; the bitterly funny Big Big Baby begins, "I heard you got a lady pregnant". There are references to "researching things to buy online", or Whittle doing "a nice impression of a man who messaged me" – the mundane stuff of life pushed through their atmospheric filter.

KING HANNAH
I'M NOT SORRY, I WAS JUST BEING ME

Yet there is a tension here, lurking in the disconnect between Merrick's nonchalant vocals and the simmering volatility of the music, one that creates the sense of people holding it all together on the mutual understanding that it could fall apart at any moment. The Moods That I Get In or the callow Sour Times of Foolius Caesar fall into old patterns of relationship behaviour, while the thinned-out trip-hop blues of A Well-Made Woman quickly shows its vulnerability: "I want to be a mother one day." There's a sweet nostalgia for their lost youths on Go-Kart Kid (HELL NO!) and Ants Crawling On An Apple Stork (spelling artists' own), but it comes with the feeling of something always being lost: "What a time to waste, our time."

With *I'm Not Sorry, I Was Just Being Me*, they try to pin it all back down, keep it in place, make it work for them. You can take it, or you can leave it, they suggest, but close the door on your way out. Whether it's all King Hannah are ever going to be is their call, but for now, it's more than enough.

Andy Bell

★★★★

Flicker

SONIC CATHEDRAL. DL/LP

More exemplary post-shoegazing rock from the Ride guitarist.

The photo on the cover of Andy Bell's second solo album is a previously unseen outtake from the inner sleeve of Ride's 1990 debut *Nowhere*, and some of the songs originate from around that time. Bell first revisited them in 2016 with Oasis/Beady Eye bandmate Gem Archer, then finished them after completing his 2020 first solo outing *The View From Halfway Down*. He describes them as a conversation with his teenage self; a post-therapy Bell healing the inner child with washes of supine sound. The result is Proustian, the 18 tracks an overwhelming rush of joy perfectly crystallised in Something Like Love – a kind of answer record to Ride's Vapour Trail, a soothing balm to the latter's heartbreak and angst – and It Gets Easier's expansive pop noise fuelled by escapist dreaming.

Lois Wilson

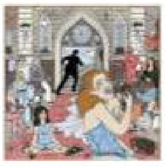
CMAT

★★★★

If My Wife Knew I'd Be Dead

AWAL. CD/DL/LP

Hyper-reality pop debut from nuts-or-genius songwriter.



Is there a lyric that screams 'millennial' louder than, "And I feel bad 'cos I didn't cry when someone I grew up with died/But I break down every time I'm on the scales"? It's not a conventional pop star lyric, but CMAT – 25-year-old Dubliner Ciara Mary-Alice Thompson – isn't conventional. Since her self-directed, tongue-in-cheek videos began appearing on YouTube, Thompson's artistic voice has grown stronger and stronger, capturing but not defined by the mental health issues she wears on the sleeve of her tasselled shirts. Gifted with a knack for sparkling toplines and galaxy-class choruses, the way she twines narrative threads into cathartic, surrealist Lana Del Rey songs is remarkable. Five minutes in her personal company would likely be exhausting, but for this album's duration her brain salad music is fantastical.

Andy Fyfe

Robert Haigh

★★★★

Human Remains

UNSEEN WORLDS. DL/LP

The electronics innovator bids adieu with elliptical, pensive piano pieces.

Robert Haigh has come and gone through many phases in four decades. There was post-adolescent glam, then a post-punk foray. A flirtation with dark electronics led to his pioneering "ambient jungle" – graceful as it was aggressive – as Omni Trio. But after *Human Remains*, the last instalment in a trilogy of brooding and beautiful piano albums, he intends to turn from music to painting for good. It's an exquisite farewell, at least: several of these brief pieces, especially Twilight Flowers, feel like tenderly melancholy reflections on distant memories. Occasional electronics, as on Lost Albion, enhance that gentle sense of haunting. Stick around for two final flashes of brilliance. A piano line snags against a roaring string section on Baroque Atom, with Haigh teasing a climax that never comes. And the finale, On Terminus Hill, condenses Sigur Rós' vintage grandeur into a short sigh that lingers, a bittersweet goodbye.

Grayson Haver Currin

The Monochrome Set

★★★

Allhallowtide

TAPETE. CD/DL/LP

Venerable post-punk individualists keep it distinctive.

Allhallowtide ends with Parapluie, a piano instrumental where the only other sound is the pitter-pat of rain. It's a fittingly reflective end to The Monochrome Set's sixteenth album. There's a lot to look back on. After emerging in 1978 as idiosyncratic post-punks, as much informed by Lou Reed and The Shadows as bossa nova, there have been stops and starts but *Allhallowtide*'s main participants are original members Bid and Andy Warren. During I, Servant, Bid sings, "Servitude is wonderful… bondage is witchery", yet there's no evidence of history as a straight-jacket. The spy theme-tinged Hello, Save Me retains their mid-'80s liveliness, while Moon Garden shimmers with an irrepressible romantic yearning. For long-time fans, the albums most evoked are the mid-'90s brace, *Charade* and *Misère*. The Monochrome Set remain unmistakeably themselves.

Kieron Tyler

THE MONOCHROME SET
ALLHALLOWTIDE

Katie Silvester

Alex Cameron

★★★★

Oxy Music

SECRETLY CANADIAN. CD/DL/LP

Fourth LP from Australian Killers collaborator.

Co-writing a fistful of recent-ish Killers songs brought Alex Cameron to mainstream attention, but the Sydney native has been quietly constructing a wry solo career since 2013's *Jumping The Shark*, where he assumed the persona of a far-from beloved entertainer. Fourth time around, he's embraced a lush, harmony-drenched sound akin to late-period Fleetwood Mac or even the outer reaches of yacht rock. Yet, it's underpinned by biting, literate lyrics and mostly crestfallen characters. He asks, "Who told my brother that his kids are gonna die from this vaccine?" on the fabulous Sara Jo; he duets with Sleaford Mods leader Jason Williamson on the fentanyl dependency saga that is the title track; and he reminds us that "there's only room for one in a K hole" on K Hole. He's a marriage of opposites (there's even a rap of sorts on Cancel Culture), but feels built to last.

John Aizlewood

Trupa Trupa

★★★★

B Flat A

GLITTERBEAT. CD/DL/LP

Gdańsk rockers add fresh pre-punk ingredients to their Baltic bouillabaisse.

The first three tracks of this sinewy sixth album revisit the taut post-hardcore that earned Grzegorz Kwiatkowski's muscular quartet the reductive but appealing soubriquet 'the Polish Fugazi'. The next five take them into new territory. Lines brings a clear (and all the more welcome for its unexpectedness) echo of mid-period Pink Floyd to the table. Uniforms' sinister singalong chorus, "I wanna be all my uniforms" also showcases serious stadium-rock potential, while All And All could be one of those tantalising McCartney new song fragments in Get Back. When that woozy melodic miasma kicks into the ferocious moshpit churn of Uselessness – imagine *Fire Dances*-era Killing Joke asked to write a song about Covid-19 in an unspecified second language – it feels like Trupa Trupa have cracked it.

Ben Thompson

John Mayall

★★★

The Sun Is Shining Down

FORTY BELOW. CD/DL/LP

The man who makes the Stones look like striplings is still mired in the blues.

Few jobs require as much professional misery as being a veteran bluesman. Mayall is 88 and love is still doing him wrong – the first four songs are full of cheatin' women, busted hearts and angry phone calls (no one sends a text in the blues). Happily, later he starts to cheer up: he's still dreaming of One Special Lady and the title track salutes his happy Californian home. All this is backed by Mayall's traditional blues-boogie and spiced with guest axemen offering minor variants on B.B. King/Albert King string-bending. A shot of rootsy fiddle from Scarlet Rivera makes a refreshing change. Little here would be out of place on a Mayall record of the 1960s; while partners may be fickle, Mayall and the blues are wedded for life.

John Bungey

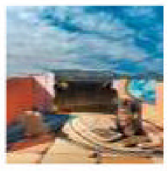
Jenny Hval

★★★★

Classic Objects

4AD. CD/DL/LP

Norwegian cross-discipline artist's disconcerting examination of a life lived.



On its surface, *Classic Objects* comes across as chill-out rave pop. But as the voice beds in – clean and glass-like – a different impression emerges. Among its lyrics, opening track Year Of Love offers up: "We were married on a rainy day… it's just for contractual reasons." This progressively intense album, the first on 4AD from Norway's Jenny Hval, charts snapshots from this multi-faceted artist's life (she also works in visual settings and has written novels). While the musical framing cleaves to the familiar, the album title refers to past events and situations as if they were inanimate entities. Correspondingly, Hval's etiolated delivery brings a distance from what's recounted, rendering this as an unsettling experience. Under Hval's microscope, the seemingly straightforward is anything but.

Kieron Tyler

Lia Ices
Family
Album

Lia Ices

★★★★

Family Album

NATURAL MUSIC. CD/DL/LP

First album in eight years from the former Lia Kessel.

From Connecticut, but a graduate of London's RADA, Lia Ices specialises in an appealing hybrid of winsome folky psychedelia, Enya's painstaking layering and a Mary Margaret O'Hara way with a vocal flutter. Fuelled by motherhood, a move to northern California with her wine-maker husband, and a re-assertion of her piano playing over the electronica which pumped through 2014's *Ices*, *Family Album* was released in the US early last year, the final work of producer (and half of the band Girls) Chet 'JR' White, who died in October 2020. He was at the peak of his powers here, enabling the beauty of his client's intricate but accessible world. Best comes last with the glorious Our Time, where choruses pile into one another and Ices' piano anchors her vocal flights, before it builds into a heroic climax.

John Aizlewood

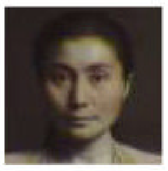
Various

★★★★

Ocean Child: Songs Of Yoko Ono

CANVASBACK MUSIC/ATLANTIC. CD/DL/LP

Superior 14-track tribute album marks 89 years of Yoko Ono.



Orchestrated by Death Cab For Cutie's Benjamin Gibbard, this compilation was conceived both as birthday celebration for Yoko Ono and consciousness-raising exercise for her music. Frustrated that – even after decades of re-evaluation – Ono's work was underestimated and overlooked, Gibbard has enlisted an intriguing cast of contributors to redress the balance. David Byrne and Yo La Tengo catch Who Has Seen The Wind?'s Renaissance mistiness; The Flaming Lips heat and cool Mrs Lennon; Sharon Van Etten finds the undertow in Toyboat's deceptively sweet hum. There are more radical realignments, such as Thao beefing up the antique pop of Yellow Girl (Stand By For Life) or Deerhoof accelerating No No No's thready agitation. Closer tributes include Stephin Merritt's Listen, The Snow Is Falling or Death Cab For Cutie's cosmically perky Waiting For The Sunrise. *Ocean Child* achieves its aim – emphasising the vibrant depth of Yoko Ono's (approximately) infinite universe.

Victoria Segal

Midlake

★★★★

For The Sake Of Bethel Woods

BELLA UNION. CD/DL/LP

Long-awaited fifth album from north Texas indie-folk rock sextet.

IT'S BEEN more than eight years since Midlake's last album. Then again, they never bombarded us with records even during a heyday when their second and third albums – *The Trials Of Van Occupanther* (2006) and *The Courage Of Others* (2010) – brought Fleet Foxes-level acclaim. 2013's *Antiphon* followed lead singer/writer Tim Smith's exit and Eric Pulido's move to frontman, and though more conventionally indie-rock, the trademark harmonies and instrumental textures remained. But that was that, until *For The Sake Of Bethel Woods*, apparently inspired by a dream keyboardist Jesse Chandler had in which his recently-deceased father urged him to reunite the band; the sleeve is of his dad in his youth at Woodstock (hence the title). The music? It's good: at times dreamily pensive (Noble), at others a kind of psychedelic prog (Gone), layered, sophisticated and melodic, especially Glistening and Of Desire.

Sylvie Simmons

Midlake: seeing the wood from the trees.

Barbara FG

Off the wall: Park Jiha lurches from wafting ambience to ratcheting tension.

Park Jiha

★★★★

The Gleam

TAK:TIL/GLITTERBEAT. CD/DL/LP

Korean multi-instrumentalist's third LP explores the intersection between music and light.

PARTLY CONCEIVED for architect Tadao Ando's exhibition of a light-moving bunker in Wonju's Museum SAN, Park Jiha's latest majors on the pulsing grooves of a yanggeum (hammered dulcimer) and almost synth-like tones of a saenghwang (mouth organ). Both are deployed amid the sparse refrains of Temporary Inertia, the intense Reich-like repetitions of The Way Of Spiritual Breath and below surface Jaws-ish pulse of Light Way. Elsewhere, spare deployment of a piri (a type of oboe) on At Dawn and the moving two-part Sunrise reinforce Jiha's ability to convey deep emotion using very few notes (and zero percussion) as she lurches from wafting ambience to ratcheting tension, often within the same song. Packed with moments of intense reflection, with melodies straddling the ancient and modern, *The Gleam* confirms Jiha as a singular talent.

Andy Cowan

insistence with wig-out guitar. A saucer-eyed treat.

Kieron Tyler

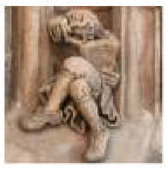
Thurston Moore

★★★

Screen Time

SOUTHERN LORD. DL/LP

A guitarist's soundtrack for "dream time, meditation, hypnagogia and pillow talk."



In autumn 2020, Moore released a super-charged band double album, *By The Fire*, finished in the early months of lockdown. Only in summer 2021 did he respond fully to the scenario, going the opposite way with solo guitar instrumentals intending to sooth and inspire (the LP title is inspired by the atypical view that digital media can be beneficial, by promoting "shared exchange") with its bell-like tones and drones; not for nothing did Moore name his own label imprint Ecstatic Peace. Yet his trademark dissonance and tunings introduce uneasy faultlines in The Station and The Home. After nine songs averaging under four minutes, Moore closes with The Realization, 10 minutes of converging light and dark, and one of the finest pieces of music that he has put his name to.

Martin Aston

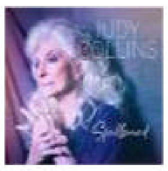
Judy Collins

★★★

Spellbound

CLEOPATRA. CD/DL

Rebirth and renaissance at 82: Collins' first completely self-penned LP.



Like Peggy Seeger and Shirley Collins, the onset of Collins' ninth decade seems to have triggered a startling career renewal. Her reputation as folk siren is largely based on her influential role as a commercial conduit for the likes of Joni Mitchell and Leonard Cohen – hardly taking into account her background in classical piano and her most recognisable hit with a Stephen Sondheim song (Send In The Clowns) – while her own sporadic songwriting is predominantly seen as a career incidental. This, her first complete LP of self-written material, serenely lays that to rest, wryly recalling her younger self in vivid portraits like So Alive and When I Was A Girl In Colorado, along with a moving tribute to pacifist activist/Trappist monk Thomas Merton and an affectionate paean to New York (City Of Awakening). It's unashamedly nostalgic, but her voice remains pure and true.

Colin Irwin

Marcin T Jozefiak

Kristine Leschper

★★★★

The Opening, Or Closing Of A Door

ANTI-. CD/DL/LP

Mothers songwriter's baroque-pop solo project.

After steering the Athens, Georgia quartet Mothers through two LPs of post-punk and anti-folk angularity (think a less sandpapery Throwing Muses), Kristine Leschper's solo debut opens the door to another world, one sculpted by synths, strings, woodwind and percussion, in which to "explore love songs… longing, encouragement, connectedness." *The Opening…* is, by turns, lush (This Animation), sparse (Figure & I), dream-pop (Blue) and ambient (Writhe And Wrestle), with exquisite hooks for each occasion. These aren't love songs, so much as opaque impressions ("Frantic pollen scatter/It paints your lovely pattern and curves along the pavement") with moments of clarity ("Just you and me my baby/And our mutual crippling self-doubt"). But even when Leschper sounds anxious, her voice sounds airy and intoxicating. Far from a closed door, she sounds unburdened, free.

Martin Aston

The Weather Station

★★★★

How Is It That I Should Look At The Stars

FAT POSSUM. CD/DL/LP

Stellar overdrive: ballad-driven companion piece to 2021's *Ignorance*.

Environmental and emotional collapses were the core of The Weather Station's last LP *Ignorance*, themes rich enough to inspire the overspill of ballads now filling *How Is It That I Should Look At The Stars*. Without drums or percussion, Tamara Lindeman's voice and piano set the vigilant, wondering tone; clarinet, saxophone and flute allow subtle fluctuations in light and heat. Endless Time is a human-scale meditation on global catastrophe, the shame of unthinking consumption blurred by Joni Mitchell-style sensory flashes – "Roses from Spain/Lemons and persimmons in December rain". On To Talk About, Lindeman tries to think bigger than love but can't; Sway is a heart-in-mouth moment of communion. These personal-and-political threads knot tightly on Stars, where she sings, "I swear to god this world will break my heart." A companion piece, maybe, but these songs can stand alone.

Victoria Segal

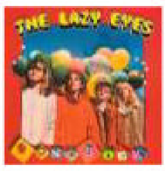
The Lazy Eyes

★★★★

Songbook

LUNATIC ENTERTAINMENT. CD/DL/LP

Australian pop-psych voyagers' debut LP is a trip.



As *Songbook* progresses, thoughts turn to *Innerspeaker*, 2010's first, landmark, Tame Impala album: similarly modern psychedelia teaming swoony, woozy songs with twinkling melodies and a hard-edged undertow. Add in lush harmonies and a vaporous, high-register lead voice and it's evident The Lazy Eyes are in full command of their mission. Like Tame Impala, this four-piece are Australian but from Sydney rather than Perth. Their debut album isn't just about wah-wah guitar, motorik drumming, pixie vocals and the psych moves, though. It's packed with fully formed, memorable songs. Tangerine is the kind of pop The Three O'Clock used to excel at. The drifting Nobody Taught Me has a lovely, rolling descending melody. That said, most of the epic Where's My Brain??? is a frazzled instro fusing Neu!

WOLFGANG FLÜR
MAGAZINE 1

Wolfgang Flür

★★★★

Magazine I

CHERRY RED. CD/DL/LP

Co-created with English collaborator Peter Duggal, featuring Peter Hook, Midge Ure and Claudia Brücken.

With the passing of Florian, and no new music from Kraftwerk, it lifts the heart when we hear from either Karl or Wolfgang from the classic line-up. Conceived as an aural magazine, to be dipped in and out of with a broad appeal, the songs have a sort of likeable innocence; humanistic and quirky. It was often remarked that Flür has matinee idol looks, and he acts out sections of songs on Magazine and Best Buy almost as if we have a portal into a home movie. Zukunftsmusik (Future Music) ironically has one of those superb electro melodies that transports you right back to 1986, and Das Beat (The Beat) sounds like a long-lost Pet Shop Boys classic. There's even a song called Birmingham. Nothing not to like here.

David Buckley

Keeley Forsyth

★★★★

Limbs

THE LEAF LABEL. CD/DL/LP

Oldham artist branches out slowly with second album.

Recorded after a period of personal turmoil and ill health, Keeley Forsyth's arresting 2020 debut *Debris* bore a clear imprint of trauma and grief, an austere document of what happens when life turns inside out. *Limbs* emphasises the same raw materials: limewashed harmonium and piano; elemental lyrics about fire, water and blood, and Forsyth's remarkable voice, a close genetic match to Nico, Anohni and Haley Fohr. There is still a latent violence on Land Animal or the spare physicality of Blindfolded, but, this time, she pushes more of *Debris'* heavy rubble away from her head using expansive synthesizers and – on closing statement I Stand Alone – a more direct performer's gaze. "I advance in all directions," Forsyth quietly states on the title track; with *Limbs*, she stretches out into new space, taking as much as she needs for these stark, resolute songs.

Victoria Segal

Lo Moon

★★★

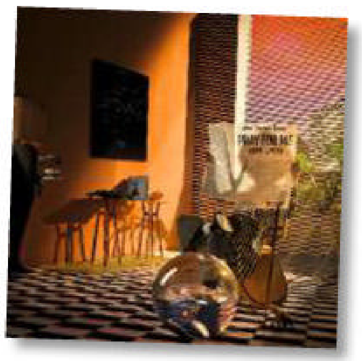
A Modern Life

STRNGR/THIRTY TIGERS. CD/DL/LP

Second album of sprawling Los Angeles dream pop.

It's been four years since Lo Moon's self-titled debut album. Since then, the quartet led by Matt Lowell and featuring guitarist Sam Stewart (son of Eurythmic Dave and Bananarama's Siobhan Fahey and the babe in arms in Shakespear's Sister's Heroine video), toured extensively, building a cult following for their expansive indie pop, as much in thrall to Modern English as My Morning Jacket. *A Modern Life* is an upgrade on that debut. There's the euphoric rush of Raincoats; the closing Stop, with its veiled threat, "While I sank to the bottom/You sang him Dolly Parton/Don't think that I've forgotten"; and the Clocks-era Coldplay piano of Dream Never Dies. It's an album to luxuriate in, but for all the appealing self-loathing of Expectations ("It's getting kinda hard not to blame myself"), Lo Moon's calling card is Lowell's songwriting craft.

John Aizlewood



Melt Yourself Down

★★★★

Pray For Me I Don't Fit In

DECCA. CD/DL/LP

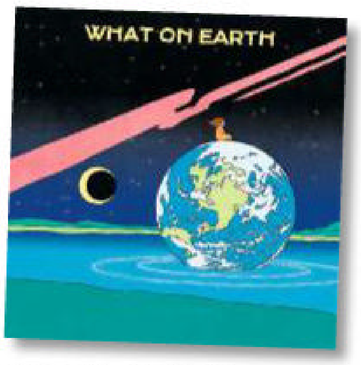
Trans-global, rave-intensity jazz-punk with subversive messaging.

In its best moments, the fourth album by Melt Yourself Down stirs up a gloriously manic chaos, like several wild raves raging all at once as pirate radio blasts from the window of a circling taxi. Led by former Acoustic Ladyland übermensch Pete Wareham (and formerly numbering sax-god Shabaka Hutchings among their ranks), the group's soundclash – combining North African funk, 23 Skidoo-ish percussion-forward post-punk, squalling brass and other insurgent party soundtracks – achieves optimum velocity from the off, and barely settles for less than a vigorous simmer throughout. There's plenty to relish within the bedlam, however: the sly message within the title track's Pigbag-gone-Middle Eastern mêlée, the grinding bass and vocals like seditious calls to prayer on Boots Of Leather, and the taut, motorik vibes of Sunset Flip all suggest that this divinely danceable riot is guided by a higher purpose.

Stevie Chick

Lunar tunes: Lo Moon make music to luxuriate in.

Nick Barber



Moon Panda

★★★

What On Earth

FIERCE PANDA. CD/DL/LP

Scandi-Californian duo make transporting debut.

Hard not to notice the current swell of debutants being billed as 'dream pop', but the cap certainly fits Moon Panda. Comprised of Californian vocalist/bassist Maddy Myers and Danish guitarist Gustav Moltke, their calming, meticulously stylised sound often has that cocooned, new snowfall quality, Myers pushing through the wardrobe to Narnia on Slow Drive, and a sweetly tranquillising presence on icy, slowcore opener Falling. Though the potency of a striking, strictly adhered-to aesthetic that includes electronic textures, weighty drums and plenty of space for Myers' processed vocals to soar and decay wanes a little over 11 close-cousin songs, you'll want to stay tuned for the odd imagery of Rabbit. Watch out, too, for Simona Mehandzhieva's simpatico video for stand-out Vacationer; a fantastical animation which serves to deepen Moon Panda's inherent mystery.

James McNair

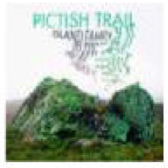
Pictish Trail

★★★★

Island Family

FIRE. CD/DL/LP

Johnny Lynch goes stir-crazy on the Isle of Eigg.

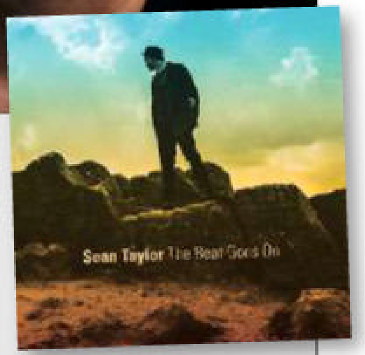


For someone with an aversion to the outdoors, the beautiful Scottish island of Eigg seems a peculiar place for Johnny Lynch, AKA Pictish Trail, to make his family home. Marooned there during the pandemic, he embraced the community, and turned to writing. The result is the sensibly titled *Island Family*. The electro whimsy which underpinned his previous work is down-played in favour of something harsher, more out there; from the scuzzy title track to the near-ballad Melody Something, via the plinky, stripped-down In The Land Of The Dead and the woozily dreamy Thistle. There's little commerciality, although It Came Back gallops along cheerily, but there is the sense of a man doing as he pleases and guessing – correctly – he'll take his audience with him.

John Aizlewood

AMERICANA

BY SYLVIE SIMMONS



Sean Taylor The Beat Goes On

Sean Taylor

★★★★

The Beat Goes On

SEAN TAYLOR SONGS. CD/DL

Eleven new songs including one based on a Robert Frost poem.

Taylor's new album finds him once again stuck at home in London, working long distance with his Austin-based producer and fellow musician Mark Hallman. But where the theme and lyrical focus of its predecessor (2021's *Lockdown*) were more a socio-political take on the pandemic – selfishness, prejudice, isolationism, greed – *The Beat Goes On* has a sweetness to its gentle, tender tracks (lush, beautiful opener It's Always Love; spare, voice-and-piano closer The Heart Of The Ocean) and a warmth to its more upbeat songs (Let Kindness Be Your Guide; Better Times). Its darkest moment is in the moody Lament For The Dead, with its "distant sirens and final breaths", dusty vocals, acoustic guitar and cello, but it's lovely too. Once again, the piano plays a big part, while there's also some perfectly placed steel and a saxophone in the gorgeous, bluesy, nightclub title track.

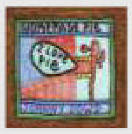
ALSO RELEASED

Johnny Dowd

★★★★

Homemade Pie

MOTHER JINX. CD/DL



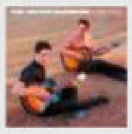
Dowd's new album (homemade right down to the cover art) has about everything a fan could want. Raw and direct, somewhat less experimental than recent albums, there's a slew of slow, dark, stalking ballads (Call Me The Wind) and creepy zombie blues (Shack). The title track, with its growly synth, thumping drum and Dowd's twisted vocal – strangely sugared by backing singer Kim Sherwood-Caso – is the perfect all-American murder song referencing crucifixes and homemade pie.

Cactus Blossoms

★★★★

One Day

WALKIE TALKIE. CD/DL/LP



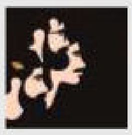
The flipside to Dowd's dark, deviant Americana is this duo from Minneapolis – singing, guitar-playing brothers whose sweet, tight sibling harmonies and lovely '60s-esque pop-country understandably bring comparisons to the Everly Brothers (Hey Baby; One Day; I Could Almost Cry). Here and there you hear a touch of JJ Cale breeziness and, on Ballad Of An Unknown, urban country noir with socio-political lyrics. Jenny Lewis guests on the duet Everybody.

Harley Kimbro Lewis

★★★★

Harley Kimbro Lewis

HKL RECORDS. CD/DL/LP



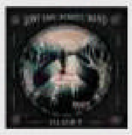
Martin Harley, Daniel Kimbro and Sam Lewis, three artists who've individually made a name in blues and country, got together in a studio in East Nashville for the roots equivalent of a CSN album. A very good album it is too – confident and varied, with some excellent singing and songs ranging from insouciant country-blues (What To Do) to neo-American Songbook (Cowboy In Hawaii) and classic country (Neighbors).

Lost Dog Street Band

★★★★

Glory

ANTI-CORP. CD/DL/LP



This fine album opens with the dark and droning Until I Recoup (Glory I) – intense male vocal, violin, you could imagine Nico singing it – and ends with I Believe (Glory II), churchy bluegrass with banjo, fiddle and multiple voices. In between, on songs that bring to mind classic country ballads (Losing Again) and sometimes the righteous anger of young Steve Earle (Fighting Like Hell To Be Free), there's a lyrical theme of redemption, finding a way to the light. *SS*

Destroyer's Dan Bejar: looking at things from a different angle.

Nicolas Bragg

Dizzy spells

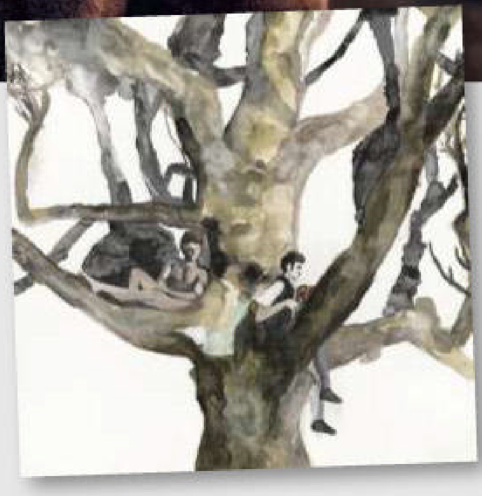
The wonderful and frightening world of Dan Bejar continues its expansion. By **Victoria Segal**.

Destroyer

★★★★

Labyrinthitis

BELLA UNION. CD/DL/LP



"YOU HAVE to look at it from all angles/Says the cubist judge from cubist jail," sings Dan Bejar on June, one of the tightly encrypted songs on his thirteenth Destroyer LP. It's a line that could stand as a mission statement for the pleasing disorientations of *Labyrinthitis* (named after a vertigo-inducing inner-ear disorder) as much as Bejar's entire career. Synth-pop *flâneur*; torch-song hipster; lo-fi poet: Bejar has rarely lacked arresting perspectives, a different angle.

While *Labyrinthitis* still echoes 2011 breakthrough *Kaputt* in its love of New Order, The Cure and Associates, these songs come mined with surprises. "An explosion is worth a hundred million words," he sings on faintly satirical folk coda The Last Song, "and that is maybe too many words to say." Here, it feels the hyperliterate Bejar is trying to up the explosions – these songs feel a little more reckless, their compounds more volatile. June busts out in Close (To The Edit) playfulness, LCD Soundsystem at the creative writing retreat; The States sounds like Momus covering Into The Groove before radiating out into ambient trance.

Bejar's lyrics often suggest he's zeroing in on a great truth, an epiphany so bright and terrible it must be described in sideways language, never approached head on. Dread seeps through everything. Suffer mentions poisonings and "a drowning in the Trevi Fountain" while Nick Cave hellscape Tintoretto, It's For You, sounds like a Faustian pact being cashed in: "The ceiling's on fire and the contract is binding". Eat The Wine, Drink The Bread again suggests artistic vanity and compromise in the face of doom: "I piss on the floor/The band sets up on the floor," sings Bejar over oddly inappropriate disco. Even a beagle's bark ("ruff ruff") is open to interpretation.

There are gentler moments – the title track's chirruping instrumental, It's In Your Heart Now's unforced New Order euphoria – but at times, Bejar's urgent allusions turn *Labyrinthitis* into a problem to be solved, a musical Rubik's cube to twist into line. Does Tintoretto, It's For You evoke electroclash as a comment on cycles of hype and obsolescence? Does June's "strike for more pay" nod to The Fall's C'N'C-S Mithering? Given this is a man who obscurely named 2017's *Ken* after Suede's working title for *The Wild Ones*, it's not impossible – but before you know it, you've got red string and newspaper cuttings pinned all over the walls, tracking meaning like a TV detective hunting a serial killer.

In its way, it's an admirable MO. *Labyrinthitis* is another tantalising Destroyer album, one that resists being clutched too tight or loved too hard as it roams its peculiar world. For those prepared to follow Bejar's philosophical loops and cosmic hunches, however, it can spin you round, a record always on the side of the angles.

Gonora Sounds: Daniel (guitar) and younger son Proud (drums) bring the beat from the street.

Rokia Koné & Jacknife Lee

★★★★

Bamanan

REAL WORLD. CD/DL/LP

A-list producer meets "the Rose of Bamako".

Stuck in Bamako, where pandemic and political instability piled curfew upon lockdown, Malian singer Koné had a half-finished album languishing in limbo when she received a call from the California-based U2/Taylor Swift producer Lee, who had been inspired by hearing what her band's guitarist, Salif Koné, had contributed to albums by feminist collective Les Amazones D'Afrique. "Floored" by her vocals, he took the multi-tracks from her album, stripped away the arrangements and replaced them with electronics, highlighting what he figured were the strongest elements, discarding the extraneous. With more space to breathe, the singer's voice is brought to the front – it's hard to imagine tracks such as Soyi N'galanba or Mansa Soyari with wholly traditional backing, but here they sound positively anthemic, even arena-filling, while Mayougouba is destined to fill club dancefloors the world over.

David Hutcheon

Gonora Sounds

★★★★

Hard Times Never Kill

THE VITAL RECORD. DL/LP

Are you ready for the feelgood album of the year? Courtesy of Zimbabwean guitarist and son.

BLIND ZIMBABWEAN guitarist/singer Daniel Gonora and his teenage drummer son Isaac made a decent living busking on the streets – one suspects all that is about to change. After film of them performing caught international attention, they were picked up by a New York indie, recruited extra musicians and singers, and recorded nine tracks capturing their loose and funky sungura beat. It's utterly glorious, from the rumba-like guitar lines to the blend of sweet vocal harmonies and Gonora's rough baritone roar, to the drum fills straight from the Keith Moon playbook. There's not a second here when your heart won't be thumping with the ridiculous joyfulness of it all, and if the band ever line up gigs in your neck of the woods, you won't be satisfied until you've seen them at least three times. Ladies and gentlemen, this is what it's all about.

David Hutcheon

Michael Rother & Vittoria Maccabruni

★★★

As Long As The Light

GRÖNLAND. CD/DL/LP

Neu! guitarist's collaborative investigation of musical dreamstates.

Rother's first album since 2004, *Dreaming*, arrived under cover of 2020's *Solo II* box set of later work, and here he quickly returns for a subdued if deeply soothing team-up with his partner Maccabruni. During that lengthy interim, he successfully toured his own Neu! show, but his solo music only bears comparison with more placid, meditative vintage tracks like Weissensee. At a guess, *As Long As The Light* was conceived at Rother's home in Forst, east Germany, before being completed after he moved to Pisa in June 2020 to join Maccabruni. There it appears the subtle shifting of sunbeam across flora became a fascination, as expressed in his elegantly FX'd, sustain-heavy playing here. Maccabruni brings an agreeably complementary techno perspective, via musicbox-style "synth bells" (Edgy Smiles), breathy coldwave voicing (You Look At Me) and See Through's ethereal keyboard rippling, which recalls both Aphex Twin's *Selected Ambient Works Vol. II* and that hazy mindstate between semi-consciousness and deepest Sleepyland.

Andrew Perry

as long as the light

Robert Stillman

★★★★

What Does It Mean To Be American?

ORINDAL. CD/DL/LP

Eighth solo album from the Margate-based American composer.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN
TO BE AMERICAN?

Born in Maine, Robert Stillman has lived in the UK for the past decade, creating music that blends together elements of spiritual jazz, exotica, and the sound worlds of Charles Ives, Van Dyke Parks and Harry Partch. For this new work he took individual gut-level improvisations of tenor sax, clarinet, keyboards and drums, then worked them into individual pieces that interrogate and question his American identity. If that sounds dry and theoretical, the results are anything but. Opening track Cherry Ocean is eight minutes of spectral Surf's Up ruminations on landscape and self, while other tracks encompass everything from psychedelic Brass Connection funk to Ayler-intense free jazz and pastoral New Age, with one track, Deep Time USA, sounding like a euphoric head-on collision between Arnold Dreyblatt and Ornette Coleman.

Andrew Male

Lady Wray

★★★★

Piece Of Me

BIG CROWN. CD/DL/LP

Superb coming-of-age soul from the Atlanta, Georgia singer.

2016's *Queen Alone* repositioned the former Missy Elliott protégé as a classic soul singer. With producer Leon Michels, she went back to her church roots and sang from the heart. This follow-up builds on that. With Michels producing again, its 12 songs, mostly autobiographical, were written while Wray was pregnant, and the title track, about the demands of motherhood, was put down in one take just a few weeks before she gave birth, Wray in a chair pouring her feelings out straight. The uncluttered, intimate setting is perfect for her, that sassy honeyed alto, pushed to the fore throughout the album, reminiscent of Minnie Riperton's at times but really her own thing. On the heart-stirring Melody, it's just voice and gently strummed guitar, while piano and drums frame the topical Beauty In The Fire.

Lois Wilson

Widowspeak

★★★★

The Jacket

CAPTURED TRACKS. CD/DL/LP

Brooklyn duo dream harder on album number six.

WIDOWSPEAK

Enveloped in its own languid mini-universe, *The Jacket* is broadly a curious concept LP narrated by a member of fictional group, Le Tex. Her day-job, sewing stage threads for country & western, art rock and yé-yé covers bands provides a window on a scene and the backdrop to her own band's rise and fall. Back in the real world, Molly Hamilton's languorous, seductive vocals further elevate simple, Velvets-meet-The-Cowboy-Junkies arrangements, guitar foil Robert Earl Thomas entices with wobbly curlicue riffs (Salt) and minimalist twang (Everything Is Simple), and the psych-flute motifs on While You Wait keep things fresh. If the mood is sometimes that of Twin Peaks oddness in and around the rag trade, *The Jacket* is ultimately a meditation on the fleeting highs, dashed hopes and revised ambitions that define most band's careers.

James McNair

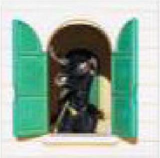
Superchunk

★★★★

Wild Loneliness

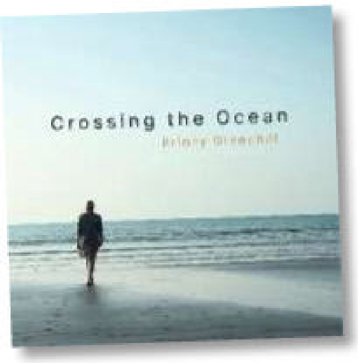
MERGE. CD/DL/LP

North Carolina powerpop legends shine on twelfth LP; plus luminous guests.



Long beloved of US poet Maggie Smith, it transpires from her accompanying biog, Superchunk sound daisy-fresh on album number 12. Its breezy, rejuvenating melodies often contrast with some rather stark messages, hence exquisite Norman Blake and Raymond McGinley-assisted climate change alert ("I'm not ready for an") Endless Summer, and the solidarity-in-world-gloom closer If You're Not Dark, wherein Sharon Van Etten sings back-up. Happily, it's the band's sheer joy in creation that stays with you, frontman Mac McCaughan's winning, slightly cartoonish vocal timbre earning an extra gold star for Set It Aside, and Andy Stack of Wye Oak's rippling sax solo on the title track a delightful ambush. For all *Wild Loneliness*'s concerns about our ailing world, it's unmistakably a tonic. It's also a life-affirming thank-you note for what we have left.

James McNair



Briony Greenhill

★★★

Crossing The Ocean

BRIONYGREENHILL. CD/DL

Soul jazz from British teacher of "collaborative vocal improvisation".

Greenhill's jazzy, languid lyrics groove on the healing beauty of song, the planet and your own heart and soul, like Marvin Gaye crossed with a funky Earth mother. There's no place for cynicism here. UK-born Greenhill worked in corporate sustainability until her side hustle got noticed and she quit, first to study technique with US vocalist Bobby McFerrin then teach improv singing. Opener Die Every Day has a lo-fi intimacy, just double bass, piano and Greenhill crooning before she lifts into fluid freewheel – "Die every day like the rose… fall every day, like rain." If it's drowsily Kate Bush, Prayer For Peace meanwhile could be a Joni Mitchell track and Morning Bird a gorgeous stream of happy scatting. There's occasional Sondheim-style indulgence, but this is sensual music that, if you want them, might give extra reasons to live.

Glyn Brown

James Taylor Quartet

★★★★

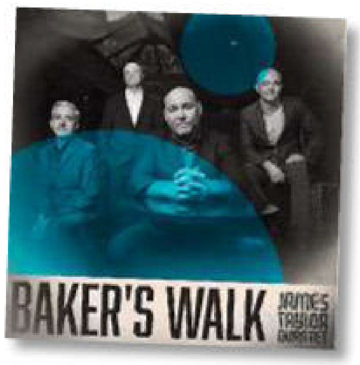
Baker's Walk

AUDIO NETWORK. DL/LP

Kent keyboardist's first all-Hammond organ album in 20 years.

Recorded live in six days at Abbey Road studio with just his Hammond quartet and guest saxist Martin Williams, *Baker's Walk* is a return to 1988's *Wait A Minute* days, when paying tribute to his Hammond heroes – Jimmy Smith, Jimmy McGriff, Jack McDuff – JT packed the university circuit with the Theme From Starsky And Hutch and Lulu. On *Baker's Walk*, his touchstones also take in library music composers Alan Hawkshaw and Keith Mansfield plus *The Booker T Set*-era M.G.'s, with these 10 Taylor originals a sound gallery of percussive funk and instro-R&B. In the former camp, More Hustle Less Bustle and Who Put That There, both sinuous organ trails weaving through in-the-pocket bass and drums. In the latter, Paris Blue and Sun's In My Eyes, rich in melody, atmosphere and mellow groove.

Lois Wilson



METRONOMY
SMALL WORLD

Metronomy

★★★

Small World

BECAUSE MUSIC. CD/DL/LP

Seventh LP from the mainstays of UK synth-pop.

Cribbing enough ironic distance from, but also hugely drawn to the '80s, Metronomy have become one of the linchpins of British pop. Their sound – windswept synths undercut by a sense of seaside provincialism – was set in stone with 2011's *The English Riviera* LP and continues on *Small World*. "It was fun what I did/Got a job, had some kids/See you in the abyss", Joe Mount sings on Life And Death, while the chorus of Love Factory ("her love is like a factory and every day she makes me work") throws a grenade into monogamous ideals, against a gossamer backing. Doomed nostalgia melts into optimism on the Destroyer-esque Things Will Be Fine and Loneliness On The Run. But *Small World* suffers from sonic conservatism: the Tame Impala-lite of I Lost My Mind is undercooked, while It's Good To Be Back's treacly synths are a touch self-parodic.

Priya Elan

Tears For Fears

★★★★

The Tipping Point

CONCORD. CD/DL/LP

First album in 18 years from the mega-selling duo from Bath.

Frustrated by a management who thought a new album was a bad idea (as detailed on the acerbic Master Plan) and grieving since the death of Roland Orzabal's wife in 2017 and his subsequent breakdown, a seventh Tears For Fears album seemed unlikely. Yet Orzabal has re-married and they go again. As is their way, the making of *The Tipping Point* has been less harmonious than the multi-layered vocals of the six-minute epic Rivers Of Mercy, but from the despair of the moving title track, which finds Orzabal watching his wife die in hospital, to the more upbeat Please Be Happy and Stay – the story of the duo's squabbles – they've got this one right. The more chances Tears For Fears take, the more they thrive, and they take chances here: seems like a new album was a good idea after all.

John Aizlewood

Soul Revivers

★★★★

On The Grove

ACID JAZZ. CD/DL/LP

Tasteful jazz-influenced roots reggae project.

After collaborating on the soundtrack of Idris Elba's Yardie, former Ballistic Brother David Hill and producer/dub remixer Nick Manasseh conceived the Soul Revivers project, laying tight, buoyant rhythms beneath the Westway with Ruff Cut drummer Adrian McKenzie, expressive guitarist Ciyo Brown, Galliano's percussionist Spry Robinson, and former Aswad trombonist Henry 'Buttons' Tenyue. The presence of Jamaican greats raises things to another level, with Ernest Ranglin's inimitable lines giving No More Drama irresistible hooks, Ken Boothe's Tell Me Why a call for unity that references pandemic tribulations, Devon Russell's reading of Curtis Mayfield's Underground here reconstructed the roots way, and Earl 16's Where The River crowning him one of reggae's most consistent voices. Add the vibrant trumpet melodies of Kokoroko's Ms Maurice and the soulful Alexia Coley and you have one unique LP, celebrating and furthering west London's long-standing reggae connections.

David Katz

The Mysteries

★★★★

Reeling

FICTION. CD/DL/LP

Intense Liverpool rockers' keenly anticipated debut.

The Mysteries' raw, gothic debut crawls under the listener's skin, largely thanks to singer Lia Metcalfe's impressive vocal range across sultry grunge, dark, bluesy laments and visceral anthems. In desert rock murder ballad The Bad Thing, Metcalfe tells the story of digging up the body of her ex-lover; a tale of anguish mixed with the blues, it's reminiscent of P.J. Harvey's early work. Nods to Harvey can be detected throughout these 12 tracks, particularly in the opening chords of Dangerous and Life's A Bitch. The fuzzy penultimate song All These Things lightens the tone, before the brooding conclusion of Still Call You Home, performed solo by Metcalfe self-accompanying on guitar. A striking introduction to a band who take discomfort, tie it in a bow, then stamp on it with their boots.

Celina Lloyd

Eddie Vedder

★★★★

Earthling

SEATTLE SURF/REPUBLIC. CD/DL/LP

After *Into The Wild* and *Ukulele Songs*, Vedder's first solo LP since 2011.

PRIME NAVIGATOR of Pearl Jam, it's not clear why Eddie Vedder needs a further outlet. Skewing towards the earnest, melodic rock his day-job has made a virtue of for three decades, *Earthling* scarcely answers this question, but is satisfying nonetheless. The first side peaks with Brother The Cloud, serving as both a powerful memorial for his friend Chris Cornell, and a chronicle of Vedder's enduring grief. The second half is more playful, a trio of punk-rockers reminding us Vedder spent his teens worshipping Bad Religion (with Stevie Wonder on thrash-punk harmonica on Try). A hokey duet with Elton John (Picture), meanwhile, is balanced by the charmingly Beatles-esque Mrs Mills. Throughout, *Earthling* toys with classic radio-rock clichés, only to cleanse them of jadedness via Vedder's trademark wholehearted investment, a trick which still charms.

Stevie Chick

Steady Eddie: Vedder still has the ability to charm.

Danny Clinch

EDDIE VEDDER EARTHLING

Babeheaven

★★★★

Sink Into Me

BELIEVE. CD/DL/LP

Troubled eroticism and affecting melancholy from the shoegaze Sade.

The surface of Babeheaven's soulful dream-pop might be all soft contours and smooth edges, but these still waters run deep, a pervasive sense of anxiety disturbing the hypnagogic bliss. Crooning from within layers of vaporous synthesizer, Nancy Andersen sings like a chillwave Sade, her understated poise channelling a deep blues more histrionic vocalists couldn't access. Hers is a voice adept at communicating all-consuming longing – check her plea of "Let me engulf you" amid the smothering eroticism of the title track, or Erase's tale of addictive love. Elsewhere, she's scanning the horizons for distant storm clouds, as on the sublime Don't Wake Me, her escapist dreams underpinned by delirious, unexpected chord changes and spare guitar solos. The carnal shoegaze-funk of Make Me Wanna, meanwhile, pairs Andersen with rapper Navy Blue, and the results are thrilling – she should do it more often.

Stevie Chick

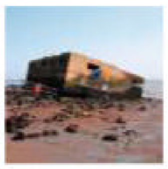
caroline

★★★

caroline

ROUGH TRADE. CD/DL/LP

New London-based collective make expansive debut album.



Depicting this exploratory octet's meditative performance of a slow-evolving, dynamics-rich epic reminiscent of late-period Talk Talk, the beautifully shot art house video for caroline's debut single Dark Blue situated them at the deep end of a disused swimming pool. With its Appalachian folk, electronica and minimalist classical influences, the rest of their eponymous debut is similarly daring. Experimental miking techniques, spare strings and choral singing feed into almost devotional-sounding, mostly instrumental pieces which flag the band's improvisational roots. Quiet marvels such as IWR, beginning with languid Spanish guitar then suddenly party to an astonishing sonic reveal, are highly impactful, while found sounds are woven in dramatically (Hurtle). Though the percussive, struck guitar strings interlude Zilch is perhaps an inquiry too far, caroline's flare for conjuring the liminal space between sleep and wakefulness frequently enchants.

James McNair

Cypress Hill

★★★

Back In Black

MNRK!. CD/DL/LP

DJ Muggs goes AWOL again, but Black Milk brings the darkly funky noise.

A more modest proposition than 2018's psychedelic hip-hop epic *Elephants On Acid* – which saw returning DJ/producer Muggs corral the group from the rock-rap wastelands into which they'd latterly blundered – Cypress Hill's tenth finds Muggs again absent, ceding the desk to Detroit producer Black Milk. The resulting sinewy, minimal funk delivers their most purely hip-hop release since breakthrough *Black Sunday*, with veteran MCs Sen Dog and B-Real on pugilistic form throughout. The dominant lyrical theme remains their beloved herb, though good vibes are in short supply: virtual legalisation in most of the US hasn't led to a cessation in the 'war on drugs', and the limber, dubby likes of Open Ya Mind and Bye Bye train paranoid eyes upon the Feds behind the door. Bare-knuckled rhymes and eerie singsong hooks deliver the trademark thrills, though Muggs' lysergic touch is often missed.

Stevie Chick

Babeheaven: soulful dream-pop with added anxiety.

Tegen Williams

Mattiel

★★★

Georgia Gothic

HEAVENLY. CD/DL/LP

Alternative-pop duo from Atlanta impress with their chameleonic shapeshifting.

Mattiel's subtly subversive third LP impresses with the craft of their songwriting and their eclectic, chameleon-like skipping between styles. There's some fine wit at play here – opener Jeff Goldblum re-imagines The Strokes as '60s girl-group crooning a wry paean to a man resembling the offbeat Hollywood star. And singer Mattiel Brown is an adept shapeshifter, affecting a weathered croon on the twang-driven On The Run, channelling the metropolitan funk of Luscious Jackson on Subterranean Shut-In Blues and seesawing at will between the overdriven swagger of early Karen O and the vulnerable ennui of late-era Karen O. You might struggle to identify where their influences end and begin, but Mattiel's charisma – and solid gold tunes, in the form of Lighthouse and the darkly gothic Blood In The Yolk – ultimately win out.

Stevie Chick

Robert Glasper

★★★

Black Radio III

LOMA VISTA RECORDINGS. CD/DL/LP

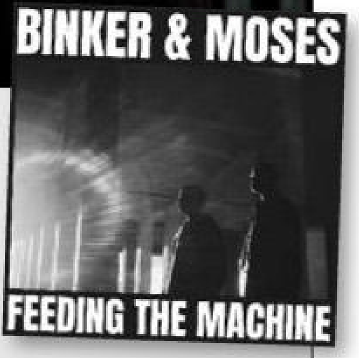
Third instalment of Houston jazz pianist's meld of jazz, hip-hop and soul.

Robert Glasper's industry pull has expanded exponentially in the decade since *Black Radio* elevated him from the jazz shadows – reflected by a cast list that includes Gregory Porter, Common and Ty Dolla $ign. Far removed from the wild fireworks of his jazz sets, this song-based vehicle for more melodic chords and flowing keys boasts duets between Esperanza Spalding and Q-Tip (Why We Speak), Musiq Soulchild and Posdnuos (Everybody Love) and a deep-voiced rap from Meshell Ndegeocello that perfectly marries with H.E.R.'s downcast balladeering (Better Than I Imagined). Much of the rest, however, is little more than showy, slick and generic R&B, with Glasper becoming virtually untraceable.

Andy Cowan

JAZZ

BY ANDY COWAN



Binker & Moses

★★★★★

Feeding The Machine

GEARBOX. CD/DL/LP

The first studio LP in five years from London jazz scene's breakout stars traces new ground.

Freewheeling tenor sax and drum duo Binker Golding and Moses Boyd had nothing written when they entered the studio with Max Luthert (a fellow veteran of Zara McFarlane's touring band). Luthert's modular synths and tape loops, often manipulated in real time, add an extra textural dimension to the wistful meanderings and brooding menace of Feed Infinite and Asynchronous Intervals, as piercing long notes give way to a gathering storm of polyrhythmic perversions. While previous outings majored on Golding's way with a hook, his melodies are less linear here, as parping Sony Rollins-like basslines, John Coltrane-ish mid-range riffs and high-pitched Evan Parker-esque chorales (breathtaking on Because Because) flutter above Boyd's lightning-fleet beat science. Packed with urgency, edge and scope, it's light years ahead of the competition.

ALSO RELEASED

Cécile McLorin Salvant

★★★★

Ghost Song

NONESUCH. CD/DL/LP

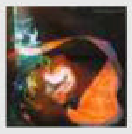
Salvant claims to be embracing her weirdness on this emotionally turbulent sixth studio outing. The classically trained singer marries technical precision with oddball charisma, ragged juxtapositions and an exquisite tonal range, exemplified by the spooked title track's two-way with Brooklyn Youth Chorus and an almost a cappella reading of Kate Bush's Wuthering Heights. The resulting ruminations on loss prove both playful and deep.

Joel Ross

★★★★

The Parable Of The Poet

BLUE NOTE. CD/DL/LP



Since he surfaced on Makaya McCraven's *Universal Beings*, this NYC vibraphone maestro's compositional skills have belied his tender years. The moving motif of Prayer is a case in point, Ross's bright solo bursts augmented by his bandmates' surging melodic lines. Standout turns from saxophonist Immanuel Wilkins (Wail) and flautist Gabrielle Garo (Guilt) enhance material teaming with maturity and warmth.

Avishai Cohen

★★★★

Naked Truth

ECM. CD/DL/LP

The Israeli trumpeter's fifth ECM LP is a slow dance call-and-response with his bandmates. Predicated on an eight-note motif (heard at the start of Part II) and recorded after just one rehearsal, clever melodic turns hold sway as Cohen's winding refrains slip in and out of Yonathan Avishai's haunted piano figures and Ziv Ravitz's unexpected rhythms. Zelda Schneurson Mishkovsky's poem Departure supplies a moving finale.

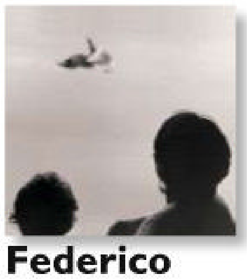
Tapani Rinne & Juha Mäki-Patola

★★★★

Open

HUSH HUSH. CD/DL/MC

Finland's icy climate is harmoniously evoked across a spare blend of overlapping synths and woodwind. Tapani's breathy saxophone melodies on Brevity, lavish clarinet chords on Fall and painterly abstractions on Still find the RinneRadio mainstay (a veteran of Edward Vesala's ECM standard Lumi), responding with empathy to Mäki-Patola's slow-release refrains and warm bell-like drones. Contemplative jazz minimalism comes no better. *AC*



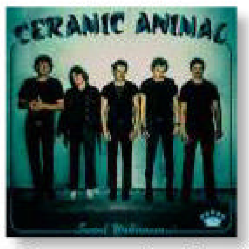
Federico Albanese

★★★★

Before And Now Seems Infinite

MERCURY KX. CD/DL/LP

Inspired by Proust's titular epithet, the Italian modern classical maverick weaves elegant piano motifs with electronic arpeggios, brooding atmospherics and gliding strings. *AC*



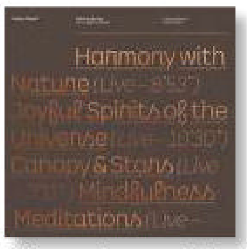
Ceramic Animal

★★★★

Sweet Unknown

EASY EYE SOUND. CD/DL/LP

The Pennsylvanian rock classicists snagged Dan Auerbach to produce their fourth LP. While the '70s blues pop of Tangled and Valerie is above par, they excel in darker moments – the pleading soul of Long Day or Big O-inspired title track's spare tremolo ache. *AC*



Matthew Halsall

★★★

Salute To The Sun – Live At Hallé St. Peter's

GONDWANA. DL/LP

The Manchester trumpeter's take on spiritual jazz can be polite, but this concert version of his 2020 album is gorgeous: lush more than fiery, adjacent – with a different set-up – to the astral mellowness of Lonnie Liston Smith. *JM*

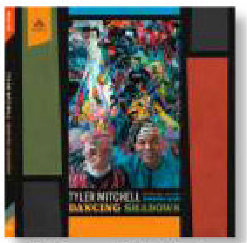
Duncan Marquiss

★★★★

Wires Turned Sideways In Times

BASIN ROCK. CD/DL/LP

Solo instrumentals from the Phantom Band guitarist share some of the solo Michael Rother's moon-lit ambient harmonics. Acoustic and treated guitar clatter and sparkle over seven folk-pastoral/motorik tracks. *JB*



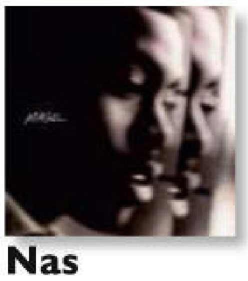
Tyler Mitchell

★★★★

Dancing Shadows

MAHAKALA MUSIC. CD/DL

New York jazz bassist recruits Arkestra major-domo sax player Marshall Allen, 97, for a spirited celebration of his old boss, Sun Ra, that emphasises Ra's music as joyous and accessible – akin to Duke Ellington, even – rather than obtuse. *JM*



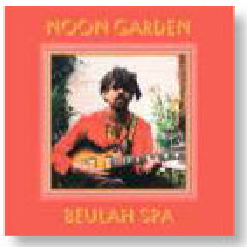
Nas

★★★

Magic

MASS APPEAL. DL

Not one to chase fads, Nas's fifteenth is a heap of comfort food for old-school rap fans: "Special like my listeners who have attachments to my old style," as he says. DJ Premier scratching up a storm on Wave Gods further asserts the retro New York vibe. *JM*



Noon Garden

★★★

Beulah Spa

LIQUID LABEL. CD/DL/LP

Flamingods' multi-instrumentalist Charles Prest proves he's no slouch on Noon Garden's entirely self-played debut. A blast of heightened pop sensibilities and wide-brimmed exotica, as heavy organs and sunshine grooves collide with radiant hooks. *AC*

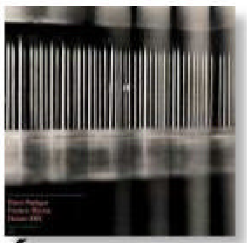
Jon Opstad

★★★

Extensions

TIP TOP RECORDINGS. CD/DL

Subtitled: 'Music for Computer-Controlled Prepared Piano' and made entirely with a Yamaha U3 Disklavier. Opstad pushes his brief to the max (delays, pitch-shifting, extended techniques) to conjure flowing techno modulations with indelible melodies. *AC*



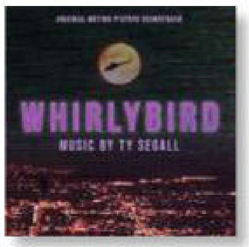
Éliane Radigue & Frédéric Blondy

★★★★

Occam XXV

ORGAN REFRAMED. CD/DL

Minimalism and drone transcendentalist Radigue composes, at 90, her first piece for organ: 44 minutes of incremental gravitas played by Blondy in London's Union Chapel. Sunn 0))) worshippers will approve. *JM*



Ty Segall

★★★

Whirlybird

DRAG CITY. CD/DL/LP

Tough to stereotype Segall as a garage rocker these days, when his range extends to projects like this: a synth-heavy chamber pop score – a bit '80s Tangerine Dream – for a documentary about Los Angeles helicopter reporters. *JM*

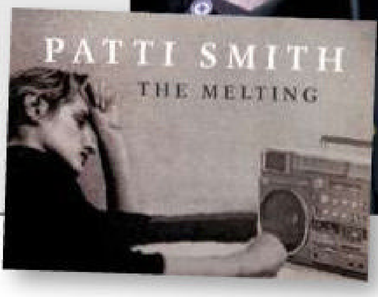
EXTENDED PLAY

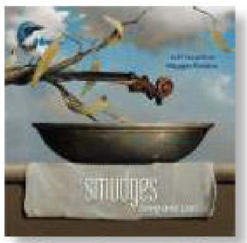
Patti Smith on Substack

Few artists are as suited to Substack as creative multi-tasker Patti Smith, who recently performed a live set at NY's Electric Lady Studio exclusively for her subscribers on the digital newsletter platform. Since March 2021, Smith's readers have received weekly instalments of her latest journal, The Melting. As the pandemic played out, her writings on "the sting of global claustrophobia" gave way to something more digressive, picking up strands from her 2015 memoir, M Train. Her profoundly lyrical prose ranges across travel, science, books, art, music, and good coffee. The third part is shaping up like a detective story (inspired – let's hope – by her love of a good ITV3 mystery drama). There's audio too, as Patti reads each episode aloud. Without the lightning rod of a live audience, the sonorous on-stage poet becomes a fond, friendly narrator. Smith revels in the intimate possibilities of the medium, promising that, "As you are reading, I will still be writing, until we collide in real time." Meanwhile, burgeoning video experiments have seen her puzzling over the camera's mirror image before reading aloud with Cairo, her Abyssinian cat, sat patiently on her lap. See them both at pattismith.substack.com

Talking aloud: Patti Smith gets profoundly lyrical on Substack.

Getty





The Smudges

★★★★

Song And Call

CRYPTOGRAMOPHONE. CD/DL

Chamber jazz/new classical lines are imperceptibly blurred as cellist Maggie Parkins and violinist Jeff Gauthier unite. Be it a John Cage tribute (Music Of Chants) or accidental Clangers pastiche (the title track's slowed-down birdsong), their avant-gardisms are offset by a light lyrical touch. *AC*

SOMEONE/ANYONE?
50
SOMETHING/ANYTHING?

Various

★★★

Someone/Anyone?

BANDCAMP. CD/DL

This 50th-anniversary tribute sees Marshall Crenshaw, Stan Lynch, sundry Brian Wilson band members and others reworking Todd Rundgren's 1972 LP track by track. Results are variable, but Louise Goffin's reboot of I Saw The Light shines brightest. *MB*

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03 April BEXHILL De La Warr Pavilion
04 April SWINDON Wyvern Theatre
06 April LIVERPOOL Philharmonic Hall
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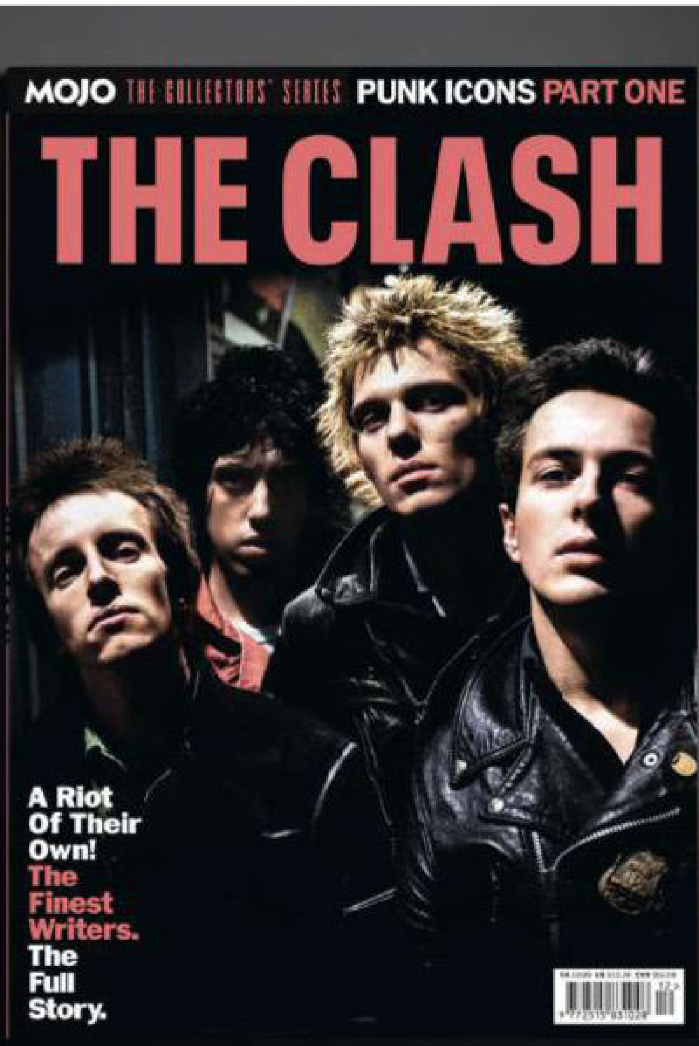
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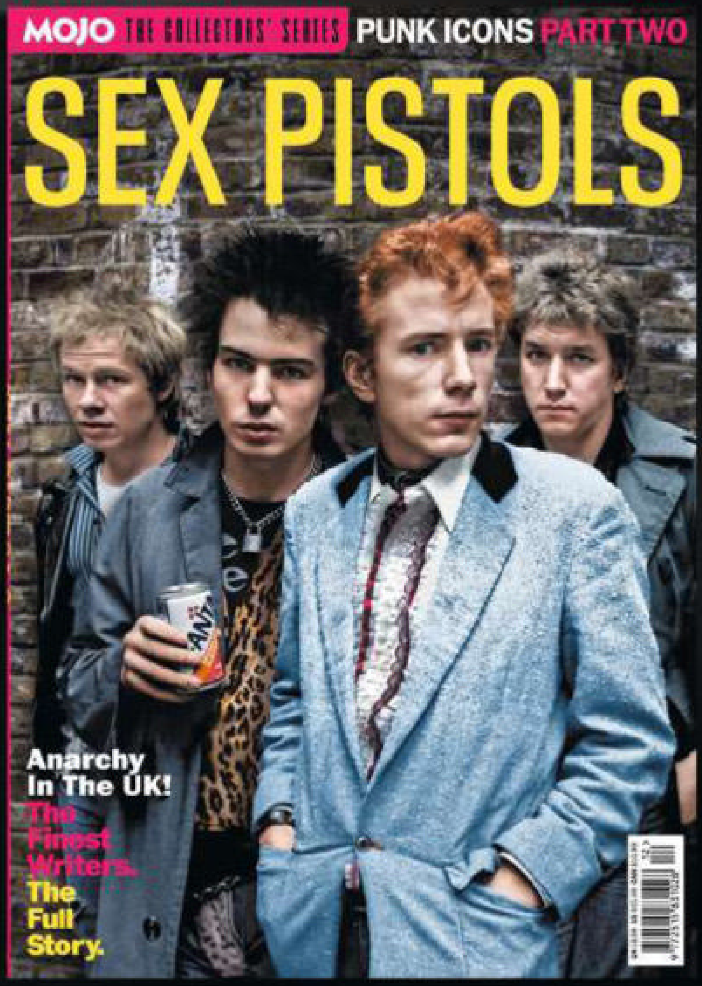
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A House through time

A previously unreleased performance from 1964: the show of a lifetime and significant historical document of the Delta blues revival. By **David Fricke**.

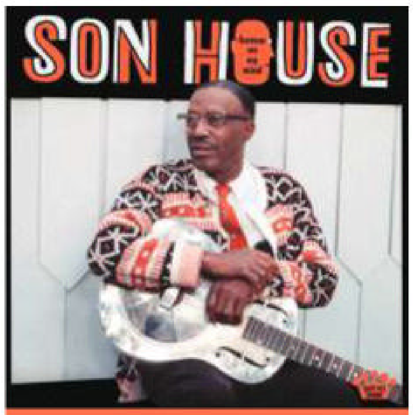
Son House

★★★★

Forever On My Mind

EASY EYE SOUND. CD/DL/LP

IN JUNE 1964, Eddie James House Jr. was 62 years old and retired from his day job as a railroad porter and cook, now passing the time with his wife Evie, television and alcohol in Rochester, New York. He was also a *rara avis*, hiding in plain sight: as Son House (per the Jr.), a living witness and party to the birth of Delta blues – a primal force of knife-cut guitar, African-American story and human cry – in his native Mississippi in the 1920s. When three young, white, blues fans drove up to his apartment building that summer, keen to bring him back to light, House was decades away from his few, profound recordings: a handful of 78s for the iconic Paramount label in 1930; two sessions for folklorist Alan Lomax in 1941 and '42, mostly unreleased at the time. He hadn't touched a guitar in years.



“Son House was a primal force of knife-cut guitar, African-American story and human cry.”

Five months later, after a remedial shake-up in memory and his fireball-slide technique on those Paramounts (see Back Story), House was on the road, managed by Dick Waterman – one of that trio of pilgrims – and at a second peak of his powers in this previously unreleased performance of a lifetime, taped at Wabash College in Crawfordsville, Indiana on November 23, 1964. Caught with a searing intimacy and clarity that are astonishing for this vintage and setting, *Forever On My Mind* opens in skidding bursts of slide on a metal-resonator guitar, like a rain of bent nails, that cohere into a stately rhythm of sharply etched chords as House's voice rises like a column of smoke in a clear sky. “I'm goin' away,” he sings, holding on to the last word with extra regret, “but you'll be forever on my mind.” It's as if House is addressing not a woman but music itself, a mistress left behind when he quit Dixie but who came right back when he needed her most. As Waterman (also instrumental in the latter-day careers of Skip James and Mississippi John Hurt) says today, “This is as close as people can get to raw Delta blues as it was played in the '20s and '30s.”

BACK STORY: FUTURE BLUES

- “I want to give an incredible amount of credit to Al Wilson (above),” says Dick Waterman, who brought Son House to Cambridge, Massachusetts in July 1964 for a refresher course in his own pre-war sorcery. Wilson – only 23 and three years from co-founding Canned Heat – was a blues guitarist and scholar so immersed in House's canon that he knew even the nuances by heart. “They sat knee to knee,” Waterman recalls, as Wilson demonstrated a song like My Black Mama – first as House cut it for Paramount in 1930, then as he did it for Lomax in 1942. “Son would watch him, play along and go, 'I'm getting my recollection!'”

Val Wilmer/Redferns/Getty Images

By the spring of 1965, House was signed to Columbia and recording *Father Of Folk Blues*, a studio comeback with long reach. The White Stripes covered its opening track, Death Letter, on 2000's *De Stijl*, and Black Keys guitarist Dan Auerbach, who is releasing *Forever On My Mind* on his Easy Eye Sound label, grew up on his father's copy of the Columbia LP. “The younger Son House is different – faster tempos,” Auerbach notes. But the older man on the 1965 album and to even more immediate, vivid degree on these live takes, “reached a point in his life when he didn't need to be so fast. He took his time to make his points, and it felt like it cut deeper.”

House was practically born at the crossroads – outside Clarksdale in 1902 – and ran with the neighbourhood legends. Paramount star Charley Patton was a mentor, taking House along on a trip to the label's Wisconsin studio that produced the latter's entire 1930 corpus for the company: six titles, three of them spread over both sides of a 78. One tune, Walkin' Blues, which only survived as a test pressing, was adapted wholesale by the young Robert Johnson – more pest than protégé in House's estimation – and another local fan, Muddy Waters. And in his best performances after rediscovery, House kept going back there, Waterman says: “To the 1920s and 1930s, to Tunica and Clarksdale, this place in his mind. His eyes went back in his head, the sweat came off him. It was a full commitment to the music each time.”

You hear that emotional travel as House returns here to his Paramount and Lomax artefacts. In Pony Blues, his keening vocal mirrors the guitar's shattering wails; Levee Camp Moan is mined with rippled-spike and rock-slide fills. The Way Mother Did, House's twist on the traditional Motherless Children, starts in Delta steel: curt, metallic strokes of guitar that sound like the instrument is singing to him and impatient for reply. It's the call-and-response of a Mississippi Sunday morn except the guitar is the preacher and House, once he steps up, is the hallelujah. He was, in fact, a minister for a time, before turning to the devil's work – and still drawing on the experience for a punch line 40 years later. Listen closely for the crowd's response when House hits the end of the first verse in Preachin' Blues: “You know I wanna be a Baptist preacher/So I won't have to work.”

But work is all House had after 1943, until Waterman, Nick Perls, the future founder of Yazoo Records, and Phil Spiro, a Boston folk and blues DJ, found the singer in Rochester, literally sitting on his front steps, at the end of a roundabout search with stops in Memphis and Lake Cormorant, Mississippi (where House drove tractors on area plantations). Empire State Express was a brand new blues in 1964, combining classic Delta metaphor with House's own years on the railroad (“She's 'bout the rollingest baby on the New York Central line”). He also brought the South up north in Death Letter, a lament immortalised on *Father Of Folk Blues*. In a 1965 interview with Chicago broadcaster Studs Terkel, House explained how news of the passing of a friend or loved one came by mail – “An envelope with the little black stripe around it.” At Wabash College, he is still working on the lyrics that define the Columbia version. But the shock and sorrow are already there to devastating effect in House's anguished falsetto and ghostly shivers of slide – a grief so close you'll be afraid to open your own mail.

House had seven more years in music before ill health and the drinking forced a second retirement in 1971. (He died in 1988 aged 86.) But on this extraordinary album, House was, as he told Terkel, “An old man but I got young ideas.” In 1964, they were already calling Johnson, long gone, the king of the Delta blues singers. Here was the living royalty.

"A witness to the birth of Delta blues…": Son House, circa 1967, caught on *Forever On My Mind* with searing intimacy and clarity.

Pure spirit: jazz pianist Mike Longo (second right) keeps it Mainstream with (from left) Ernie Wilkins, Carmine Rubino, Carlos ‘Patato’ Valdes and Al Gafa.

lines. Crewcut, in particular, stands out for its singular focus and Iggy-style swagger. Maybe they were never meant for pop radio after all.

Lucy O’Brien

Various

★★★★

Mainstream Funk

WE WANT SOUNDS. CD/DL/LP

Excellent fourth part in the series spotlighting the New York label.

BETWEEN 1971 AND ’75, the time frame this label cherry-pick covers, Mainstream was providing a home for soul, funk and jazz acts enlightened by the spiritual questing of John Coltrane. One, Sarah Vaughan, hadn’t recorded for four years, but as ascendant horns crown sublime vocals and communion is sought with the divine, her 1971 reading of Marvin Gaye’s Inner City Blues (Make Me Wanna Holler) brings one of her and the label’s most transportive performances. Dave Hubbard, the saxophonist and flautist who later worked with Lonnie Liston Smith, provides another high with his soul-jazz reworking of Sly And The Family Stone’s Family Affair, while 1975’s Betcha Can’t Guess My Sign by Prophecy brings levity with its bonkers Johnny Guitar Watson-meets-Ohio Players-meets-P-Funk-at-prayer sound.

Lois Wilson

Herbie Nichols

★★★★

The Prophetic Herbie Nichols Vols. 1 & 2

BLUE NOTE. LP

The obscure jazz pianist rises again.

A Harlem-born pianist/composer, Nichols is best remembered as the co-writer of the Billie Holiday ballad Lady Sings The Blues, but also enjoyed a brief spell at Blue Note Records between 1955 and 1956 where he recorded three excellent but overlooked albums. The best was *The Prophetic Herbie Nichols*, originally released as two separate 10-inch LPs, combined on this vinyl reissue. It’s not surprising Nichols is a forgotten figure as his music is an acquired taste. His penchant for quirky melodies and clunky dissonances (as displayed on Blue Chopsticks and Cro-Magnon Nights) invite comparison with Thelonious Monk, but over the course of 12 unique tracks, ably supported by bassist Al McKibbon and drummer Art Blakey, Nichols proves he’s a true original. Sadly, he died of leukaemia in 1963 but on this evidence, his music still needs to be heard.

Charles Waring

Various

★★★

Swedish Pop & Beat 1963-1969

RIVERSIDE. CD

Unfiltered overview of the musical ecosystem which birthed ABBA.

The *Nuggets* of Swedish ’60s music was 1984’s *Searching For Shakes*, an eye and ear-opening primer of a fertile scene then little-known beyond Scandinavia. A key cut was 1965’s Words Enough To Tell You by Stockholm beat masters Mascots. Here, it crops up again on this literally titled 2-CD comp. Some other …*Shakes* bands also reappear with different, less edgy tracks: Namelosers, The Shakers, The Shanes, Tages. This is not a beat or Mod-centric comp though. Schlager rubs shoulders with novelties, harmony pop and so-so hit parade covers (such as Go Now, by Gothenburg’s Lucas), and all four members of ABBA feature in their early band or solo incarnations. This particularly Swedish take on the era’s homegrown pop is best taken as a primer on the formative context in which the future Eurovision winners operated.

Kieron Tyler

Various

★★★

1979: Revolt Into Style: 76 Year-Defining Tracks

CHERRY RED. CD

Anything goes in this attempt to document 1979’s burgeoning indie scene.

Seemingly selected by plucking random songs and acts out of a hat (or, more accurately, licensing vagaries), *Revolt Into Style* is a rather incoherent attempt to document 1979’s indie scene. There’s the genuinely obscure (Belfast’s Zipps; Bracknell’s Three Party Split), the chart-friendly (Madness, Clash, Human League) and revered titans (Joy Division, Teardrop Explodes, Magazine). Yet, what may seem like a glaring weakness is a great strength. The absence of any cohesion to the selection of individual tracks (Squeeze get the hit version of Up The Junction; Dexys a demo; Ian Dury & The Blockheads a minor album track) makes for a box of eclectic delights and discovery. If Jonnie & The Lubes’ I Got Rabies might have been better left in obscurity, The Passage’s Taking My Time is a reminder that they (and a handful of others) deserve reconsideration.

John Aizlewood

Complex

★★★

Live For The Minute: The Complex Anthology

ESOTERIC/CHERRY RED. CD/DL

The brief life of Blackpool psych-proggers whose 1971 debut goes for £10,000!

Steve Coe would later mastermind Monsoon’s 1981 sitar-fired hit Ever So Lonely, but 10 years earlier he was the organ-playing co-writing force behind Complex’s self-titled ‘demonstration record’ – just 99 copies pressed. Looking back, the band mis-read the market, and their timing was off. By 1971, organ-drenched psych pop was old hat, and it sat uneasily alongside such tracks as ska-lite Josie and cabaret oddity Mademoiselle Jackie. Second album *The Way We Feel* was equally scattershot, adding heavier rock and funk. It similarly failed to snare a label deal. Coe’s replacement Mike Proctor piloted 1972’s unreleased acetate that included covers of Theme From Shaft and By The Time I Get To Phoenix; 1973 demos attempted a glam/bubblegum makeover, again to no commercial avail. With this anthology, Complex’s fascinating, flawed saga finally gets aired.

Martin Aston

Goodbye Mr Mackenzie

★★★

The Glory Hole

BLOKSHOK/NEON TETRA. CD/DL/LP

Special edition re-release of GMM’s pounding, paranoid 1995 epic.

Minus Shirley Manson’s rich backing vocals, and whittled down to a trio, GMM’s fourth and (so far) final album has a raw charge. Lead vocalist/guitarist Martin Metcalfe admits that what emerged was “a pretty warped kind of album”, driven by a furious DIY punk ethic. Fed up after years of trying to fashion radio-friendly hits, along with bassist Fin Wilson and drummer Derek Kelly he hunkered down to the essence, creating the densely packed drama and dark comedy of tracks like Overboard, the cry of a drowning man, and She’s Got Eggs, a howl against the music industry. In places the vocals are strained and the lyrics simplistic, but this is overdriven by the twisting, ingenious, lurching guitar

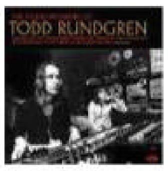
Various

★★★

The Studio Wizardry Of Todd Rundgren

ACE. CD/DL

Diverse, disparate productions from Upper Darby Beatles obsessive.



1968’s Open My Eyes, Nazz’s youthful discharge of ebullient Mod pop, begins this concise summary of Todd Rundgren’s work as writer/producer, while 1977’s proggy Love Is The Answer, by Utopia, closes it. Sadly, there’s none of his solo material, but the remaining tracks celebrate his innovation at the controls for others, spanning the combustible blues of Janis Joplin’s One Night Stand, recorded with Paul Butterfield in 1970, to Denver singer/songwriter Jill Sobule’s 1990 So Kind, a powerful acoustic folk number dealing with domestic abuse. Also included is the New York Dolls’ 1973 punk blueprint Jet Boy, Badfinger’s 1971 masterclass in melancholy powerpop Baby Blue, and 1974’s sumptuous You’re Much Too Soon by Hall & Oates.

Lois Wilson

CECIL TAYLOR
ANDREW CYRILLE
JIMMY LYONS
SIRONE
THE COMPLETE, LEGENDARY, LIVE
RETURN CONCERT
THE TOWN HALL
NYC NOVEMBER 4, 1973

Cecil Taylor

★★★★

The Complete, Legendary, Live Return Concert

OBLIVION. DL

The avant-garde pianist at maximum avant.

Often acclaimed as the most adventurous avant-garde jazz pianist, Cecil Taylor invented a new keyboard vocabulary in the 1950s and '60s, combining a jazz background and format with classical elegance and pounding percussiveness. After years of abstention from group recording, he reunited with earlier collaborators, alto saxist Jimmy Lyons and percussionist Andrew Cyrille (along with new bassist Sirone), in 1973 at New York's Town Hall. While Taylor released part of this lionised concert, this is it *in toto* for the first time. All man-made musical barriers are removed, and the result is pure improvisation. The energy expended by Taylor and company creates an impassioned density of relentless note clusters and becomes a two-hour experience that's as much physical as aural. Challenging, but ultimately liberating: this is what freedom sounds like.

Michael Simmons

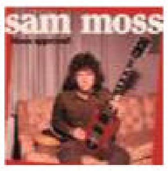
Sam Moss

★★★

Blues Approved

SCHOOLKIDS. CD/DL/LP

Overdue first-ever release from North Carolina blues-soul luminary.



The bulk of this curio is eight tracks for an unissued 1977 recording by North Carolina's Sam Moss at Mitch Easter's Chapel Hill house. Easter drummed, Moss played everything else, and on a TEAC 4-track conjured a sound framing the blues of Albert Collins and Mike Bloomfield within a Muscle Shoals soul vibe. His guitar shifts between direct and liquid, and the songs groove. Moss's bread and butter was trading vintage guitars, and he took his own life in 2007. The story is supplemented by tracks from 1989 to 1993 and a 1967 version of Act Naturally. Future dB's mainstay Gene Holder was in one of Moss's early bands, and that outfit's Chris Stamey discovered the long lost *Blues Approved*. The title was Moss-speak for anything he endorsed – spot-on choice for a loving tribute.

Kieron Tyler

Franz Ferdinand

★★★★

Hits To The Head

DOMINO. CD/DL/LP/MC

No-nonsense, frill-free explanation of why they've sold 10 million albums.

HITS TO THE HEAD
Franz Ferdinand

With drummer Paul Thomson departing in October, Franz Ferdinand are down to leader Alex Kapranos, bassist Bob Hardy and a clutch of new arrivals. If they are approaching their last days, it's been an eventful 20 years. *Hits To The Head* captures the journey from the upstarts who name-checked Terry Wogan to the less jagged but more stately arena act who delivered 2018's *Always Ascending*. Any drops in quality are skated over and the final two of 20 tracks are new: co-produced by Stuart Price, both suggest that even now the tank may not necessarily be empty: Curious is Franz Ferdinand at their most incessantly slinky *à la* LCD Soundsystem, while Billy Goodbye is a heroic stomper worthy of The Sweet. Despite omitting anything from FFS, their career re-booting alliance with Sparks, this is as good as introductions get.

John Aizlewood

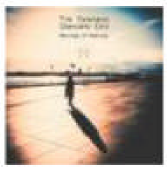
Tim Bowness & Giancarlo Erra

★★★

Memories Of Machines

KSCOPE. CD/DL/LP

Singer-songwriter angst meets electronic moods.



Few musicians dish up a soundworld quite as sumptuous as that of No-Man's Tim Bowness and multi-instrumentalist Giancarlo Erra: a cello keens, electronica shimmers, a sad trumpet quietly calls, a hushed voice sings. And the results can be quite beautiful, with the mood of twilight melancholia gently upped on this tenth anniversary remix (on the original the artists called themselves Memories Of Machines). Bowness and Erra are abetted by Robert Fripp soundscaping and Peter Hammill playing guitar; Steven Wilson, the other half of No-Man, lends a hand. Warm Winter is all wistful yearning, Change Me Once Again has a stirring Floydian climax. But as tunes unfold at glacial pace, what will divide listeners is Bowness's breathlessly dramatic vocal style. Every lyric is relayed with heart-on-sleeve earnestness, and the mood can become stifling. An often lovely album best savoured in moderate doses.

John Bungey

Rogue beauty: Ornette Coleman, defiant and ready to attack.

Burt Goldblatt/CTS Images

Horns of a dilemma

From new radical to reborn experimentalist: the pioneering saxophonist on two vinyl box sets. By **Andrew Male.**

Ornette Coleman

Box Sets

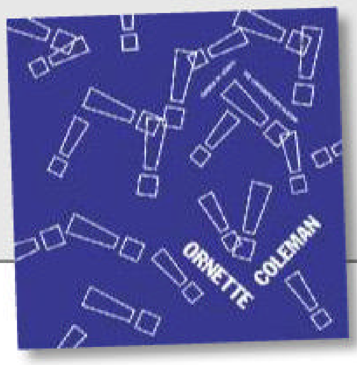
CRAFT RECORDINGS/BLUE NOTE. CD/DL/LP

IN 2015, reviewing *Beauty Is A Rare Thing*, the 6-CD box set of Ornette Coleman's 1959-1961 Atlantic recordings, I had an epiphany. Part of me wanted chaos, to experience all the turmoil and confrontation listeners heard when this divisive Texas-born 27-year-old arrived on the late-'50s US jazz scene. Instead, the music sounded euphoric, the call-and-response of Coleman's sax and Don Cherry's cornet raw and bright; snorting, laughing and stretching blues phrases, tracked and circled by Charlie Haden's minimal bass and Billy Higgins' forward-flashing drums. Then, wham, halfway into Disc 4, Haden and Higgins go, replaced by Scott LaFaro on bass, Ed Blackwell on drums, and suddenly something essential has gone. Beauty a rare thing indeed.

Now here's a chance to hunt down that elusive beauty in the music Coleman made before and after those Atlantic cuts. *Genesis Of Genius* (Craft Recordings, ★★★★★) brings together *Something Else!!!!* and *Tomorrow Is The Question!*, Coleman's exclamatory late-'50s recordings for Hollywood independent Contemporary. As Ashley Kahn explains in his linernotes, this was music defined by "experimentation… hardship and disdain". And *Something Else!!!!*, his debut, is Ornette at his wildest, the blurred ghosts of communal gospel, Western Swing and big bands twisting through rhythms and harmonies like a spinning late-night radio dial. On *Tomorrow Is The Question!,* Coleman and Cherry are joined by the more 'professional' rhythm section of drummer Shelly Manne and Percy Heath and Red Mitchell on bass. Odd but thrilling, Coleman sounds youthful and insolent in such company.

Six years on, the six-LP *Round Trip: Ornette Coleman On Blue Note* (★★★★) finds the 36-year-old saxophonist emerging from a period of self-imposed exile, and ready to attack with a new unhinged sound. 1965's live two-volume *At The Golden Circle Stockholm*, is a masterpiece. Simultaneously thrilling and unnerving, Coleman playing pure, punching rhythms that speed alongside the driving cymbal rides and cries of drummer Charles Moffett. An even more radical percussive approach is adopted on 1966's *The Empty Foxhole*, with Coleman enlisting his 10-year-old son Denardo on drums. Described by Shelly Manne as "unadulterated shit", Denardo's drumming now sounds deadly serious and punk as fuck. The lawlessness continues on Jackie McLean's 1967 LP *New And Old Gospel*. As Thomas Conrad points out in his accompanying essay, Coleman's trumpet playing is either "defiantly sharp or flat" but both McLean and Coleman play with a sanctified fire.

For his last two Blue Note albums, 1968's *New York Is Now!* and *Love Call*, Coleman hired Jimmy Garrison and Elvin Jones from John Coltrane's Classic Quartet. Accompanied by tenor saxophonist Dewey Redman, Coleman goes in heavy, burrowing deep into the blues and gospel of his youth with a complex gravitas that perplexes and beguiles in turn. Now released on Blue Note's deluxe vinyl imprint Tone Poet, these records aren't cheap, but rare beauty always comes at a price.



She wants to save you: Irma Thomas, at seay in the '70s.

FILE UNDER...

Canned sadness

Shut away for half a century, a soul legend's shelved recordings make it into the light and on to vinyl. For collectors only, says **Jim Irvin**.

BETWEEN 1961 and '65, Irma Thomas – once dubbed, probably by a press agent, the Soul Queen of New Orleans – cut superb singles: It's Too Soon To Know, Cry On, It's Raining, and many others for the local Minit label under the auspices of Allen Toussaint, who wrote lively arrangements in the spirit of contemporary girl groups like The Shirelles. When Minit was sold to Imperial, Irma was upset enough to write a song called Wish Someone Would Care. Ironically, it became her first US pop hit, and the title song of her debut album. The Imperial sides actually kept up the high standard, with writers and producers like Van McCoy, Jerry Ragovoy and Bobby Womack. Time Is On My Side, It's Starting To Get To Me Now, Breakaway, and Anyone Who Knows What Love Is (Will Understand) – by Jeannie Seely and Randy Newman – were all superb and showed Irma to be a singer of acuity and variety.

She may have not been having hits here, but British soul fans were paying attention; she even had a UK fan club. Norman Jopling, reporting for Record Mirror in 1966, around her first UK visit, summed up her appeal. "She isn't a rasping bluesy songstress. She just sings beautiful melodic songs in a clear, clean voice with a maximum of soul."

But as soul grew grittier, Irma's lighter style was not so sure-fire. By 1970, it looked like her career was on the slipway. Then up stepped Jerry Wexler at Atlantic, who sent her to Jackson, Mississippi to record with Wardell Quezergue, producer of Jean Knight's Mr Big Stuff. That produced a lone 45 in 1971, Full Time Woman, an aching country-flavoured ballad which, although it flopped, Wexler later mentioned in an interview as one of his favourite recordings. Irma sings it well, but the song is underwhelming, effectively hookless, relying on its solemn atmosphere. Next, Atlantic sent her to Detroit to record with Joe Hinton where she cut a further five originals and three covers in May 1972. These and other unreleased tracks were subsequently mislaid until soul historian David Nathan unearthed them in 2004. Now they make their vinyl debut on *Full Time Woman – The Lost Cotillion Album* (Real Gone Music) ★★★.

I'd love to tell you they coalesce into a masterpiece, but I can't. The material just isn't good enough. A song from the Hinton session called Shadow Of The Sun has one of the weirdest orchestral intros I've ever heard – possibly the work of the great Arif Mardin who's thought to have arranged the strings for these sessions – and one of the most 'who cares?' hooklines, making it both underwritten and overwrought. Bobbie Gentry's Fancy – the memoir of a high-class hooker – lacks the original's chilling nonchalance. Irma attacks it while her drummer goes off on his own trip. Together they turn in a misfire. Sweet standard Time After Time doesn't work recast as a deep-soul shouter. On proto-disco tune Adam And Eve, Irma sounds uninspired and throws away its one good line: "This time I'll ignore the snake."

IRMA THOMAS
FULL TIME WOMAN
The Lost Cotillion Album

"By 1970, it looked like Irma's career was on the slipway."

"The problem with so many of those sessions was that they simply didn't give me time to learn the material," Irma told Nathan. "Joe [Hinton] told Atlantic I didn't have 'it' any more and they let me go. A few years later, I ran into Joe in Oakland, where I was performing regularly, and I told him, 'Hey, for someone who doesn't have 'it' any more, I'm doin' all right!"

Inappropriate, under-rehearsed material and heavy-handed production meant the Soul Queen of New Orleans couldn't shine. This is the soundtrack to a missed opportunity.

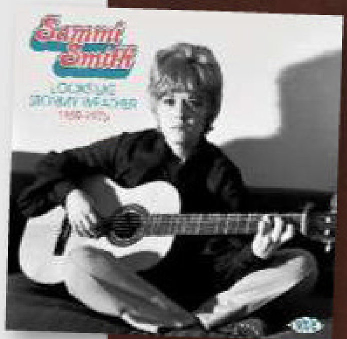
Getty

Sammi Smith

★★★★

Looks Like Stormy Weather 1969-1975

ACE. CD/DL

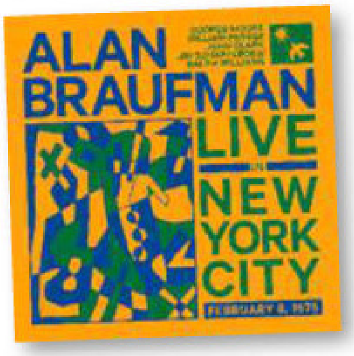


Excellent 'best of' from the outlaw country singer born Jewel Faye Smith.

Had Sammi Smith sung soul or pop, she'd be as celebrated as Dusty. Instead she used her deep, rich tones to bring to life country songs, mostly heartbreak or penitent ones written by such giants as Kris Kristofferson and Merle Haggard. The first named provided Smith's only crossover hit: her version of his Help Me Make It Through The Night from 1971 is intoxicating and fuelled with desperate desire. Other benchmarks on this compilation, which focuses on her Mega label years, include the staggeringly sad I Miss You Most When You're Right Here and He Makes It Hard To Say Goodbye, the first delivered in an intimate sob, the second maudlin lowing. The previously unissued Desperados Waiting For A Train and Texas 1947, both written by Guy Clark, hold real sway too.

Lois Wilson

Play it again, Sammi: Smith brought country songs to life.



Alan Braufman

★★★★

Live In New York City February 8, 1975

VALLEY OF SEARCH. CD/DL/LP

Potent archive recording offers vivid reminders of the Big Apple's loft-jazz scene.

A Brooklyn flautist/saxophonist who's currently readying a new album, Braufman's credits range from The Psychedelic Furs to Philip Glass, but back in 1975 his career began with *Valley Of Search*, his much-vaunted debut LP for Bob Cummins' iconic India Navigation imprint. Judging from its recent reissue, *Valley Of Search* continues to resonate with loft-jazz aficionados; and fittingly, all but one of its nine tracks can be heard on this recently unearthed live performance, recorded just before the album's original release. Accompanied by a six-piece band including pianist Cooper-Moore and the legendary bassman William Parker, Braufman creates a seamless series of densely layered musical tapestries driven by rivulets of percussion. Among the standouts is the intense but exalted Thankfulness with its intricate polyphony, and the more meditative Tree Of Life.

Charles Waring

Lennie Tristano

★★★★

Personal Recordings 1946-1970

MOSAIC/DOT TIME. CD

Epic retrospective confirms obscure jazz pianist's historical importance.

Admired by Charlie Parker, with whom he played in the late-1940s, Chicago-born Tristano (1919-1978) was a blind, virtuosic pianist and composer who briefly rose to fame in the 1950s but then quickly faded from view. This superbly curated limited edition 6-CD box set (only available from mosaicrecords.com) opens up the pianist's archives to reveal a treasure trove of 74 mostly unreleased performances. While Tristano's fluency as a pianist is impressive – particularly via an eerie avant-garde piece called Spectrum and the intricately woven Tania's Dream – a clutch of explorative 1948 group recordings with Lee Konitz and Warne Marsh show him arriving at a revolutionary free jazz concept before Ornette Coleman. An evocative portrait of a musician who – as the missing link between swing, bebop and free jazz – deserves wider appreciation.

Charles Waring

LONEY HUTCHINS
APPALACHIA

Loney Hutchins

★★★

Appalachia

APPALACHIA RECORD CO. CD/DL/LP

Remastered one and only album by Cash family affiliate.

Always write about what you know was the advice of Mark Twain, and that's exactly what Loney Hutchins did on his sole album, recorded in 1979 but unreleased until 1981. Raised by illiterate dirt farmers in northern Tennessee (his name was a misspelling of 'Lonnie'), a chance encounter with June Carter Cash led to him signing with Johnny's publishing company and a long association with country's First Family. Opener Timbertree drips with observations about old trucks and gnarled mountain trees that only a native eye could recall; the roughneck, roundhouse honky tonk of Son Of A No Good Man reeks of spilled beer and cracked heads; the simple pleasures and down-home satisfaction of We Got It All has the same ring of truth that imbued so many of Cash's own songs. Hutchins never quite hit the big time, but the journey from where he began is remarkable.

Andy Fyfe

Pink Floyd

★★★

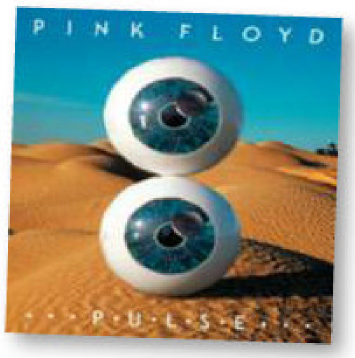
P.U.L.S.E.

WARNER MUSIC. BR/DL/DVD

David Gilmour and Co's regal-sounding live album/film revisited.

In 1994, guitarist/bandleader David Gilmour took Pink Floyd out for what seems likely to remain their final tour. The ensuing album and film, *P.U.L.S.E.* (recorded at London's Earls Court Arena), featured a flashing LED light on its original spine. The light returns on physical copies of the restored, re-edited film, which now includes a second disc of videos and concert screen films. The packaging is peerless, but slightly ahead of the music. The show's first half is weighted towards Floyd's latest *The Division Bell* album and its 1987 predecessor *A Momentary Lapse Of Reason*. It's a big, polished, expensive-sounding performance; all soaring backing vocals and clattering extra percussion. High Hopes references peak '70s Floyd, but other 'new' songs now sound a little hungover from the 1980s, before a welcome soup-to-nuts performance of *The Dark Side Of The Moon* rights any wrongs.

Mark Blake



Spirit

★★★★★

Twelve Dreams Of Dr. Sardonicus

CHERRY RED/ESOTERIC. CD

The LA rockers' masterpiece, with 11 extras plus live disc.

When the best of '60s rock is discussed, LA's Spirit are too often neglected – a shame since they were among the finest of the era, revered by Zeppelin and others. Connoisseurs often consider this fourth album, from 1970, their finest. Predating Steely Dan, they were exemplars of smart rock: complex, yet catchy melodies, soaring harmonies, shifting tempos, surreal lyrics, driven by jazz drummer Ed Cassidy and guitar god Randy California. *Sardonicus* has had a presence on classic rock radio ever since release, particularly Nature's Way, California's prescient warning of environmental catastrophe. California began his career as a Hendrix bandmate, and while his playing is singular, he shared with Jimi the ability to make his guitar wax like vocals. This 2-CD set adds outtakes and an in-concert disc from two 1970 shows, at the Fillmore West and Boston's Tea Party, unreleased material that affirms how remarkable Spirit were.

Michael Simmons

The Unclaimed

★★★

Primordial Ooze Flavored

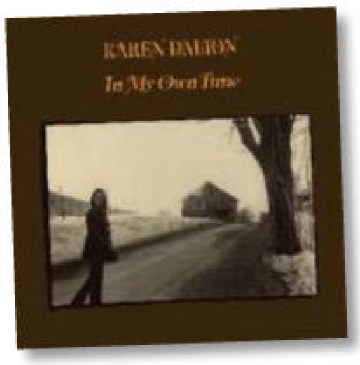
MISTY LANE. LP

Sole 1983 album from the LA garage punk outfit, plus a 1988 45 giveaway.

The Unclaimed were founded in 1979 by Sid Griffin and Shelley Ganz but made music like it was 1966. After honing their craft live on a set of covers of songs by The Seeds, Standells et al on bills alongside The Bangs, they debuted on record in 1980 with their ace *Pebbles*/*Nuggets*-patterned self-titled EP on Moxie (reissued in 2021 on Misty Lane). By 1983's mini-album *Primordial Ooze Flavored* for Hysteria, Griffin was playing in The Long Ryders, but little else had changed, the eight tracks here thrilling with a battle-of-the-bands simplicity, driven by compulsive, raw riffing and weedy organ with occasional sitar drone and Ganz's heretical shrieks and yelps.

Lois Wilson

FILTER REISSUES



Karen Dalton

★★★★★

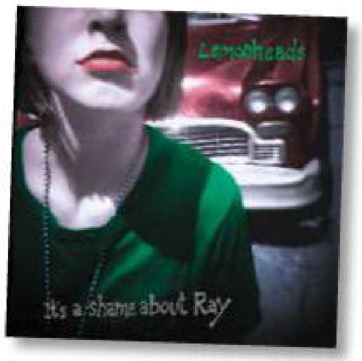
In My Own Time

LIGHT IN THE ATTIC. CD/DL/LP/MC

Resurrected treasures from a singular artist.

Barely known before her 1993 death, 'Sweet Mother K.D.' has become a beloved singer to many not yet born then. Without applying any overt effort, she embodied an unequalled emotional honesty, which may be why fans have flocked to her like parched tourists lost in the desert. It was as if she was singing to herself, a quality given credence by her utter disregard for the music business. This is her second, final album from 1971, produced by bassist Harvey Brooks, with songs from Motown, Paul Butterfield, Richard Manuel, George Jones and Percy Sledge that she transforms into personal statements. Outtakes and live tracks, essential for devotees, round out various editions. Dalton lopes like an alley cat on pal Fred Neil's Blues On The Ceiling from Montreux '71 – bewitching, unbothered.

Michael Simmons



Lemonheads

★★★★

It's A Shame About Ray

FIRE. CD/DL/LP

A 30th anniversary expansion for Evan Dando's 30-minute saving grace.

Having missed the newly-launched alt-rock adventure boat with Lemonheads' uneven 1990 Atlantic debut *Lovey*, intuitively gifted, dusty-voiced Boston punk scenester Evan Dando was given a low-expectation second chance to square the circle in his pop-smart brain between Gram Parsons and Hüsker Dü. And he nailed it, thanks to deploying bassist/vocalist/muse Juliana Hatfield across a cache of short but sweet songs Dando took back from a 1991 trip to Australia, plus the skills of LA's Cherokee Studios producers The Robb Brothers, whose Steely Dan/Doobie Brothers connections delivered him no less than Jeff 'Skunk' Baxter, playing slide guitar on Hannah & Gabi. *It's A Shame About Ray* still glows like embers of an endless summer: My Drug Buddy's narcotic ache, Confetti's bruised marriage wisdom, the giddy ecstasy-trip reportage Alison's Starting To Happen. An inessential extra disc of B-sides, rough demos and radio sessions only reiterates the creative kismet of the original's golden half-hour.

Keith Cameron

Various

★★★

Un-Scene! Post Punk Birmingham 1978-1982

EASY ACTION. CD/DL/LP

Love letter to an overlooked scene, etched on an Ansells beer mat by ex-Prefects drummer Dave Twist.

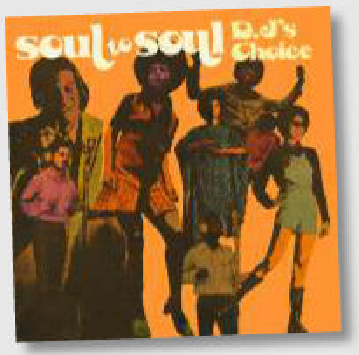
Why is the UK's second city so under-represented in rock's VIP area? Brummie comic/writer Stewart Lee, in a sleevenote to this enlightening comp, credits a local mindset that considers self-promotion "a cardinal sin". This surely makes Robert Lloyd's Prefects – represented here by a blazing, lo-fi live version of their discomfiting The Bristol Road Leads To Dachau – and Nightingales the ultimate Brummie bands; no group has courted attention or prized admiration less. Interesting then, that among similarly spiky fare (Swell Maps' cubist classic Vertical Slum; The Denizens' pungent Ammonia Subway) here are the seeds of future new romantic slick willies Fashiøn (their We're The Fashion demo is presciently Roxy/Bowie-lite) and Duran Duran (a live recording of DADA's Birmingham UK, featuring Duran bassist John Taylor on guitar and Dave Twist himself on drums, is uncompromisingly mecha-Fall). All this and early evidence of Stephen Duffy's wry tones and pop smarts on The Hawks' Big Store.

Danny Eccleston

COMING NEXT MONTH...

Wet Leg (pictured), Tinariwen, Fontaines D.C., The Waterboys, Warmduscher, Molly Tuttle, Martha Wainwright, Tindersticks, Alabaster DePlume, Pavement, and more.

REISSUES EXTRA



Dennis Alcapone & Lizzy

★★★★

Soul To Soul DJ's Choice

DOCTOR BIRD. CD

Expanded 1973 LP showcasing two of the era's premier deejays on Duke Reid's Treasure Isle label. Alcapone's fluid scat-toasting is matched by lesser-known Lizzy's sing-talk style, the duo blending impressively on a version of Alton Ellis's immortal Cry Tough. *SM*

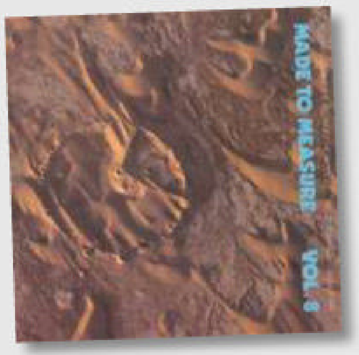
The Coral

★★★★

The Coral

RUN ON. CD/DL/LP

Twenty years (gulp) on, the Wirral psychedelic crackpots' foaming debut melts down *Safe As Milk*, The La's, pre-Fabs pop sensitivity and more insularity-looking-out/snake-charming-on-the-Volga goodness. Dreaming Of You is still a serious tune; extras include two never-heard songs. *IH*



Sussan Deyhim & Richard Horowitz

★★★★

Desert Equations: Azax Attra

CRAMMED DISCS. CD/DL/LP

Now with three bonus tracks, US composer Horowitz and Iranian vocalist Deyhim's dazzling 1986 blend of ethereal Persian trad and avant-garde electronica. Still modern-sounding today. *SM*

Hawkwind
Dreamworkers of Time
The BBC Recordings 1985-1995

Hawkwind

★★★

Dreamworkers Of Time: The BBC Recordings 1985-1995

ATOMHENGE/CHERRY RED. CD

Two 1980s live sets, with hard rocking at Reading '86 (Lemmy and Dumpy of Rusty Nuts fame join for Silver Machine) and Space Opera in Hammersmith in '88. BBC sessions from '85 and '95 (crusty synths ahoy) make this an archival treat. *IH*

Jeff Parker

★★★★

The Relatives

THRILL JOCKEY. CD/DL/LP

Fulsome love for Parker's recent *Forfolks* album makes it a good time for the jazz/post-rock/Tortoise guitarist to dust down this 2005 set. The playing's as subtle and impressionistic as ever, but there's drive and swing, too, on Mannerisms and a twinkling stab at Marvin Gaye's When Did You Stop Loving Me?. *JM*

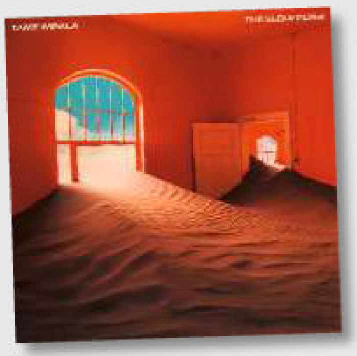
Suicide

★★★★

Surrender

MUTE. CD/DL

Henry Rollins annotates this single disc intro to NY duo whose brutalist electronics (Martin Rev) and doo wop-informed vocal bloodletting (Alan Vega) inspired generations of seething adolescents over five LPs, 1977-2002. Suicide watchers note: an unreleased take of Girl; the "first version" of Frankie Teardrop. *JB*



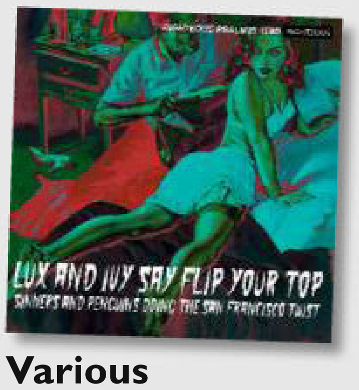
Tame Impala

★★★

The Slow Rush

FICTION. DL/LP

Vinyl box set of Kevin Parker's fourth LP on two transparent red LPs plus a 7-inch and two 12-inches of B-sides and remixes. Lil Yachty, Maurice Fulton, Blood Orange and Four Tet (Is It True in resonant, ambient chimes from 2020) emphasise the original album's dancefloor and yacht rock-leanings. *JB*



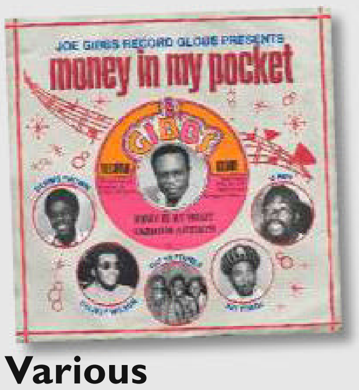
Various

★★★

Lux And Ivy Say Flip Your Top

CHERRY RED. CD

Going deep on The Cramps' Lux and Ivy's trash aesthetic as 50 tracks pinball between '50s/'60s rollicking R&B, warped doo wop, oddball rockers and teen dance crazes. Poor taste novelties like Gerry Granahan's Too Big For Her Bikini can only be put down to being from 'different times'. *SM*



Various

★★★★

Money In My Pocket

DOCTOR BIRD. CD

A 2-CD 48-track haul of producer Joe Gibbs' 1972-73 singles output that speaks to the abundance of Jamaican vocal talent in the spring of reggae's halcyon era. As harmony groups gave way to solo singers and then deejays, Gibbs served up the cream: The Heptones, Dennis Brown, U Roy and many more; 33 new to CD. *KC*

RATINGS & FORMATS

Your guide to the month's best music is now even more definitive with our handy format guide.

CD COMPACT DISC DL DOWNLOAD ST STREAMING LP VINYL
MC CASSETTE DVD DIGITAL VIDEO DISC C IN CINEMAS BR BLU-RAY

★★★★★ MOJO CLASSIC
★★★★ EXCELLENT
★★★ GOOD
★★ DISAPPOINTING
★ BEST AVOIDED
☆ DEPLORABLE

Story of the London blues: John Wesley Holder in Report 1553: Racist – A Most Dangerous Proposal, a 1969 episode of ITV crime drama Strange Report; (inset) the singer today.

Shutterstock, WENN.com

CREDITS

Tracks: Brixton Blues/Pub Crawling Blues/Too Much Blues/Notting Hill Eviction Blues/Black London Blues/Ladbroke Grove Blues/Sleeping Alone Tonight Blues/Wimpy Bar Blues/Piccadilly Circus Blues/Hampstead To Lose The Blues

Personnel: Ram John Holder (vocals, guitar), Clive Chaman (bass), Stan Chaman (guitar), Bobby Mauge (drums), Tom Parker (piano), Colin (sax)

Producer: Ram John Holder

Released: 1969

Recorded: Denmark Street, possibly Southern

Current availability: Spotify

Capital Charge

This month's hidden room in rock's mansion of mystery – a migrant reacts to the metropolis.

Ram John Holder

Black London Blues

BEACON, 1969

ESTABLISHED BY Antiguan businessman Milton Samuel, the independent Beacon label began trading above a timber yard in Willesden in 1968, down the road from Trojan Records' Neasden Lane HQ. Small but ambitious, the label's first success came after it licensed The Showstoppers' rough-cut Philly soul number Ain't Nothing But A House Party, a Number 11 UK hit in April '68. Misses followed, however, by acts including The Marylebone Ensemble, The Brixton Market and The Funky Bottom Congregation. Another release that failed to ignite would have more long-term success piquing listeners' interest – *Black London Blues* by Ram John Holder.

Born in British Guyana in 1934, the man named John Wesley Holder's father was a guitar-playing Methodist minister in Georgetown, and he grew up surrounded by music both spiritual and secular. A keen singer thrilled by the blues, Ray Charles and gospel groups including The Five Blind Boys Of Alabama, he moved to the US in 1954, initially studying to become a preacher. In 1958, as Ramjohn Holda & The Potaro Porknockers, he recorded *Songs Of The Guiana Jungle* in New York (he says he took the 'Ram' prefix from a Georgetown fruiterer, not as some reports say because he fronted The Ram Jam Band in London). He was active on the Greenwich Village folk circuit, and recalls actor Lou Gossett Jr. asking him to pass the hat round at the Café Rafio for a young singer named Bobby Zimmerman.

"Before and after I went to the States, I'm socially conscious, politically active, aware of the struggle," says Ram John Holder today. "I was attracted to learning, literature, music and liberation struggles, which I was very involved in. In my student activities, I got into trouble with the American government."

Consequently, by 1962 he was in London working as an actor and musician. From '66 he cut pop and R&B sides for Columbia and Parlophone, and worked relentlessly, playing folk nights at venues including the Marquee and the Witches Cauldron in Belsize Park. One notable event was an anti-Rhodesia benefit billed 'PSYCHODELPHIA versus Ian Smith GIANT FREAK OUT!', held at the Roundhouse in December '66, where Pink Floyd played with the Ram Holder Messengers. "I was top of the bill and Pink Floyd were my supporting group!" he says. "I was all over the place then. My God, I don't know how I got the energy."

Though Manfred Mann's Paul Jones unsuccessfully recommended Holder to Joe Boyd at Elektra, Ram John found a welcome at Beacon. Recorded in a 4-track studio on Denmark Street over a few four-hour sessions, *Black London Blues* found the singer/guitarist joined by three musicians from Trinidad who he regularly gigged with: future Jeff Beck Group member Clive Chaman on bass, his brother Stan on guitar and Bobby Mauge on drums. Tom Parker played "Ray Charles-type" piano, while the surname of the West Indian sax player named Colin has been lost to time.

In 1969, the same year Holder filmed John Boorman's satirical comedy Leo The Last alongside Marcello Mastroianni, *Black London Blues* was released. The sleeve found the groovy-looking artiste leaning on a lamp post on a cold, rainy west London street. It's an apt cover shot: the LP's loose, funky blues with gnarly guitar solos and personalised accounts of immigrant frustrations suit the image's blocked sink, pre-decimal Britishness to a tee. Similarly, this blues-via-the-Caribbean in a still-hippy English situation has its own flavours, distinct from the authenticity-minded homegrown scene. Blues tropes spin sideways: in Pub Crawling Blues the narrator stays up all night drinking pints of bitter and bottles of wine at The Star and The Bull And Bush. Notting Hill Eviction Blues evokes hiding from the rent collector, hand-to-mouth living and the ever-present threat of being out on the street. The sauntering, mocking, on-edge title song further identifies how the deck is stacked: writing to his mum from Brixton jail, the protagonist mentally walks Kilburn High Road, Petticoat Lane and Portobello Road and admits, "I had a shock in store for me" in "freaky, foggy London town… the racist landlord… the prejudice stares you right in the face." After nocturnal stop-offs at a Wimpy Bar and Piccadilly Circus, where label boss Samuel gets a namecheck, Hampstead To Lose The Blues completes the cycle, as the narrator heads north from Brixton on the London underground and bus network to a brighter future.

"What the record came out of was experiences," says Holder, who'd finessed the material playing it live in the clubs. "They're very documentary, the songs. When you had the Rachman thing in the early '60s, eviction became a scandal. Brixton Blues is a very graphic commentary on what actually happened to me on my first night in London. Same with Pub Crawling Blues – I was a big pub crawler!"

Holder recorded follow-up *Bootleg Blues* in 1971, widening his vision, he said, "beyond black London and out into the wider realm of Europe" though Hampstead Blues' admission "I've got to get away from here" suggested he remained unfulfilled (Graham Coxon has covered its song Way Up High live). After 1975's *You Simply Are*, Holder concentrated more on acting, and in 1989 found fame playing Augustus 'Porkpie' Grant on Channel 4's pioneering black sitcom Desmond's. After Desmond's ended in 1994, Porkpie got his own series, having won £10 million on the lottery. Appearances in EastEnders, Death In Paradise and, on-stage, Ma Rainey's Black Bottom followed for Holder. He's pleased that *Black London Blues* is still resonating in 2022. "I was way ahead of my time," he says with a laugh. "You know, I'm no B.B. King, I'm no John Lee Hooker, I'm no Muddy Waters… I am Ram John Holder!"

Ian Harrison

BLACK LONDON BLUES
RAM JOHN HOLDER

> "I was a big pub crawler!"
> RAM JOHN HOLDER

Space-rock men 3: Ash Ra Tempel (from left) Manuel Göttsching, Hartmut Enke and Klaus Schulze in 1971.

Ash Ra Tempel and solo

Following Berlin's astral travellers along their myriad paths, **Andrew Male.**

"THERE WAS no 'idea' behind it," said Klaus Schulze in 1997, discussing the 1970 formation of Ash Ra Tempel with Manuel Göttsching. "We just did it. No big thing. [Back then] people founded groups, joined groups, left groups, disbanded groups. Nobody cared."

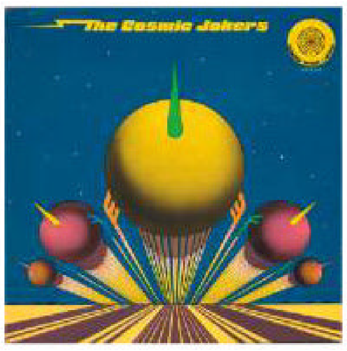
What he doesn't mention is the speakers. For in the summer of 1970, when the 21-year-old Schulze walked into West Berlin's Beat Studio, having just been dismissed as Tangerine Dream's drummer, what stopped him in his stacks was the speakers belonging to Manuel Göttsching's Berlin-based blues-jazz-improv outfit the Steeple Chase Blues Band: four huge WEM speaker cabinets, previously owned by Pink Floyd. Here was the 'idea'. "I said, We must form a band. I said, Forget blues rock for a new kind of 'space rock'."

Göttsching, born in 1952 in West Berlin, was a classically trained guitarist who'd had his head turned by free jazz. Schulze rechristened his band: Ash representing "the remains, the final curtain", Ra, the Egyptian Sun God, and Tempel, a place for rest and contemplation. Perhaps more significantly, Schulze introduced Göttsching to Ohr Recordings' Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser. Kaiser, who worked with his girlfriend Gille Lettmann and "schlager" music publisher and Hansa founder Peter Meisel, believed in a utopian new psychedelic music that would combine German folk and mythological traditions with improvisation, psychedelics and transportive religious communion: Kosmische Musik. For a brief period, the Ash Ra members were involved in numerous Kaiser projects, including the epic psychedelic party jams he released as The Cosmic Jokers, plus the tribal space-funk freakouts of Walter Wegmüller's *Tarot*, and Sergius Golowin's mountainside dream trip, *Lord Krishna Von Goloka*. And, of course, an acid-fuelled session with US FBI fugitive and psychedelics guru Timothy Leary, *Seven Up*. Kaiser's projects arguably deserve a How To Buy of their own; they certainly obscure the divergent trajectories that Göttsching and Schulze's music took once the Tempel collapsed and both began experimenting with electronic music. Here we focus on those individual paths while highlighting their best work together. Inevitably, recordings have been left out, some because their historical significance outweighs the listening pleasure (*Seven Up*), others because they are nigh-on impossible to buy without applying for a second mortgage.

"Forget blues rock for a new kind of space rock."

CAST YOUR VOTES...

This month you chose your Top 10 Ash Ra Tempel and solo LPs. Next month we want your Tortoise Top 10. Send selections via Twitter, Facebook, Instagram or e-mail to mojo@bauermedia.co.uk with the subject 'How To Buy Tortoise' and we'll print the best comments.

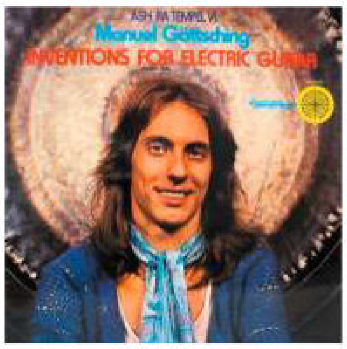


10 The Cosmic Jokers
The Cosmic Jokers

KOSMISCHE MUSIK, 1974

You say: "A fraud and a con, but when the music's this good who's complaining." Gordon Campbell, via e-mail

According to Manuel Göttsching, these live cosmic jam sessions were recorded with full knowledge of the participants. Klaus Schulze, on the other hand, still insisted they were recorded and released by Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser without the permission of the participants. Live-mixed by Dieter Dierks, the first and best of the releases features Göttsching and Schulze alongside drummer Harald Grosskopf and keyboardist Jürgen Dollase lost in a kind of heavy dub kosmische dynamic, a phased, floating sound of echo and delay. If you like this, check out the same year's heavier and harder *Galactic Supermarket*, with vocals from Rosi Müller and Kaiser's equally spaced-out partner Gille Lettmann.



4 Ash Ra Tempel
Inventions For Electric Guitar

KOSMISCHE MUSIK, 1975

You say: "Superb. It's that 'repetitive trance music with guitars' thing that Spiritualized hit on with Electric Mainline." @JonJCrowley, via Twitter

Burned out by his involvement with Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser and following the breakdown of formative Tempel member Hartmut Enke, Göttsching effectively goes solo. He's recording in his kitchen and employing a bank of echo effects to make his guitar ("there are no other instruments used!" notes the back cover) sound like some giant melancholic sequencer. Like Tangerine Dream's *Phaedra* for guitar, it is second only to *E2-E4* in its futuristic divination of techno, with Echo Waves' hypnotic ostinatos simultaneously inventing trance, the riff from Pink Floyd's Run Like Hell, and the blueprint for Jason Pierce's Spiritualized.

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blackdance klaus schulze

9 Klaus Schulze

Blackdance

BRAIN, 1974

You say: "Julian Cope isn't the biggest Klaus Schulze fan but this is his choice, so that's good enough for me." Belishabeacon, via mojo4music.com

A perfect midpoint between the unholy darkness of *Irrlicht* and the ambient placidity of later releases such as *Moondawn* and *Mirage*, Schulze's third solo LP incorporates synthesizers, phased trumpet, acoustic guitar and, shockingly, another individual: opera singer Ernst Walter Siemon, who provides gloriously doomed *lieder* on side two's epic subterranean travelogue of phased organ and drum machine, Voices Of Syn. Like a post-apocalyptic Debussy's La Cathédrale Engloutie, *Blackdance* is a work of profound eerie symbolism, summoning a cursed Gothic soundworld far removed from the kosmische utopia envisioned by Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser.

Le Berceau de Cristal
Ash Ra Tempel

8 Ash Ra Tempel

Le Berceau De Cristal

SPALAX, 1993

You say: "Don't be put off by the sleeve – Le Sourire Volé is a monster!" @johnjnicol, via Twitter

For the soundtrack to Philippe Garrel's 1975 *cinéma d'opium*, in which a heavily sedated Nico contemplates the aching void of existence while haunted by semi-mythical beings portrayed by Anita Pallenberg and Dominique Sanda, Manuel Göttsching was asked to compose "music to make you dream". Assembled from a live 1975 performance in Cannes with Agitation Free guitarist Lutz Ulbrich and a series of four-track recordings with Farfisa organ, EKO Computerhythm and an EMS Synthi Hi-Fli guitar effects unit, Göttsching conjured a series of "electric dreams". Eight mesmerising Buddhist meditations for late-night travelling, whether out on the road or in the comfort of your own home.

ASHRA NEW AGE OF EARTH

7 Ashra

New Age Of Earth

VIRGIN, 1977

You say: "I have a soft spot for this '77 album. Flows like a warm embrace from the sun. Gloriously affecting." @52Vinyl, via Twitter

Once dismissed as the worst kind of cosmic noodling, Göttsching's mid-'70s recordings have aged exceptionally well, embraced by a new wave of fans seeking out sublime deep-dream analogue space music. A composition for keyboards and synthesizers, *New Age…* is minimalist, meditative, moving from the repetitive melodic proto-techno of Sunrain to the side-long Fripp-meets-Floyd closer Nightdust, a nocturnal lullaby which also works as a benign answer to the deep-space nightmare of Klaus Schulze's *Irrlicht*. If you like this, seek out Göttsching's more guitar-oriented follow-up *Blackouts* (Virgin 1978), especially the almost Balearic funk groove of Shuttle Cock.

ASH RA TEMPEL
JOIN INN
Ohr

6 Ash Ra Tempel

Join Inn

OHR, 1973

You say: "Jenseits from *Join Inn* is one of my favourite things ever and often makes me cry a bit." @astralsocialite, via Twitter

Due to the emotional and psychedelic fallout from *Seven Up* (see intro) this would prove to be bassist Hartmut Enke's final appearance with Ash Ra Tempel. Klaus Schulze was back in the fold on drums (plus organ and synthesizer) and Göttsching was now playing alongside his partner Rosi Müller. Side one's Freak 'N' Roll is a 20-minute space jam that moves from blues-rock wah-wah into a kind of cosmic speed metal Sabre Dance without ever truly finding its feet. However, side two is utterly gorgeous, a beatless ethereal reworking of *Seven Up*'s Timeship in which Rosi Müller recounts Ash Ra's encounter with Timothy Leary as a kind of cleansing act of meditation.

IRRLICHT
Ohr

5 Klaus Schulze

Irrlicht

OHR, 1972

You say: "*Irrlicht* is the one for me, one of the most terrifying records, often had to turn it off, so relentless and unsettling is it." John Hirst, via Twitter

With his first solo album Klaus Schulze was working in the realm of ruin and decay, by means of a broken electric organ, malfunctioning speakers, and a cheap single mike recording of a rehearsal by the Berlin University Orchestra played backwards. Beginning with a soiled base of tarnished drones, Schulze adds a series of demonic Gothic organ chords to the reversed rehearsal that reverberate and summon up horrible new colours, shapes and tones. It is the sound of slow, slouching doom, eventually replaced by side two's Exil Sils Maria, a series of dying aircraft whines and extra-terrestrial dust storms, a new dawn on a ruined planet. Good times.

Ash Ra Tempel
Schwingungen

3 Ash Ra Tempel

Schwingungen

OHR, 1972

You say: "My vote would go to *Schwingungen* (and *Join Inn*, *NAOE*, *E2-E4* and *Blackouts*). All just incredible." @Nonemorerecords, via Twitter

Produced by Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser, with Wolfgang Müller on drums and Agitation Free's demon seer John L wailing on vocals, this is Ash Ra travelling into a corroded alternate future where John Lydon is singing with *Funhouse*-era Stooges. With Göttsching's demon Bo Diddley riffs, Matthias Wehler's evil alto sax wails and John L's hysterical repetition of "Flowers must die/Die die die die!", this is a bad trip you wish would last forever and end immediately. Side two's Suche and Liebe are the cure for whatever side one was: 19 minutes of deep space jungle ascent, Göttsching's synth-jacked ripples easing you into a minimalist Floydian heaven-state. Utter bliss.

MANUEL GÖTTSCHING
E2-E4

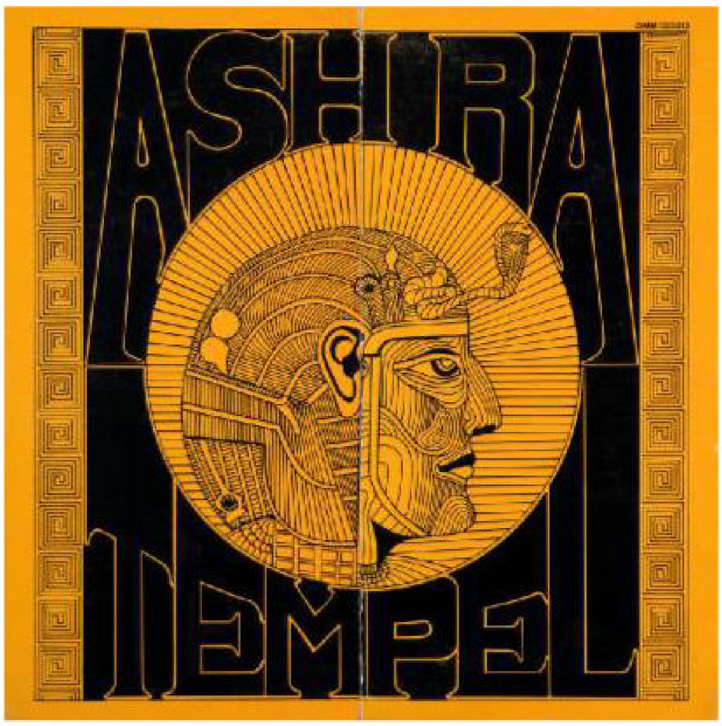
2 Manuel Göttsching

E2-E4

INTEAM GMBH, 1984

You say: "Bought it based on a glowing review in Sounds. Didn't know what to make of it at the time but gradually it's wormed its way in and is now a desert island disc." Ian Campbell, via Twitter

One of the most influential albums ever made, this techno ur-text was recorded by Göttsching in one hour in his Berlin studio on December 12, 1981. Utilising a suspended two-chord (E2-E4) vamp on his Prophet 10, a sequencer controlling the shifting accents, Göttsching gradually adding points of percussion, delicate melodic figures and guitar, *E2-E4* is a slowly evolving, hallucinatory exercise in relaxed repetition. With its euphoric simplicity blueprinted by *Inventions For Electric Guitar*, at its root core this is as much an act of spontaneous psychedelic riffage as the first Ash Ra Tempel LP.



1 Ash Ra Tempel

Ash Ra Tempel

OHR, 1971

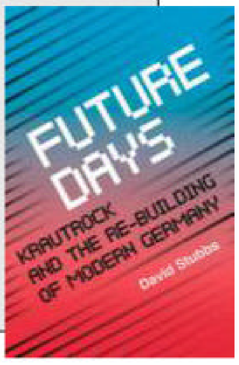
You say. "Obviously… First side of this is an absolute monster." Jon Crowley, via Twitter

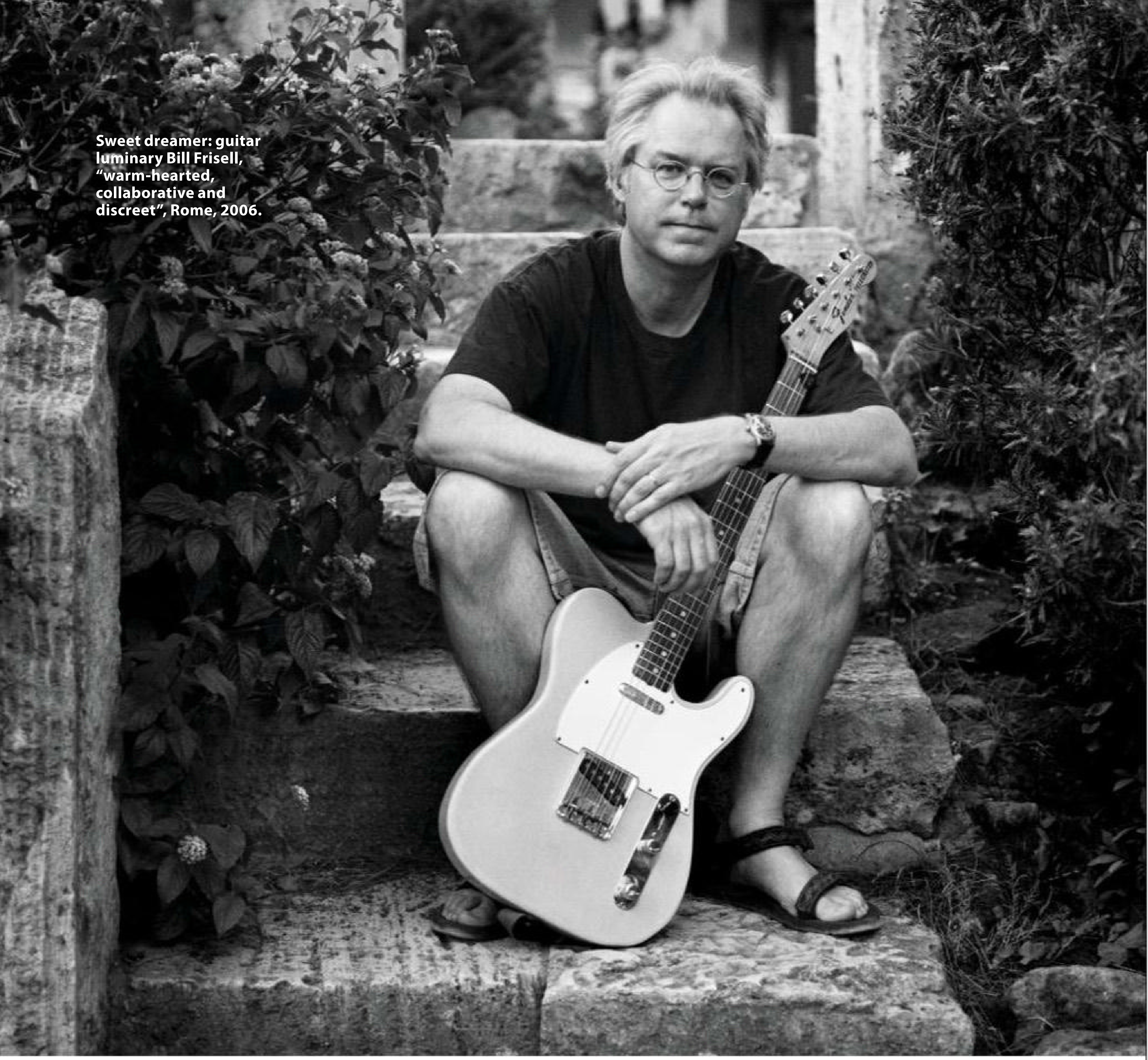
Recorded in Hamburg with Conny Plank, Ash Ra's debut formed the structural and ideological blueprint for both the band and Rolf-Ulrich Kaiser's "kosmische" philosophy. As with subsequent releases there is a single track on each side, each representing opposite yet complementary forces. Side one's Amboss ("Anvil"), begins with the FX-stoned shimmer of Manuel Göttsching and Hartmut Enke's guitars before some heavy growling drones ride in, accompanied by Schulze's tribal Detroit drums, forcing Göttsching to keep up with spectral Hendrix wails and chunky power-blues riffs. Flipside, Traummaschine ("Dream Machine") is the spatial, ambient comedown, sounding simultaneously soothing, righteous and, when those dark Göttsching riffs return, just that little bit terrifying.

NOW DIG THIS

TAROT
WALTER WEGMÜLLER

The first thing you need to do is go online and experience the wonder of Walter Wegmüller's *Tarot* (Ohr, 1973), an album disqualified from this feature due to being unaffordable in all its imprints. Tempel alumni Manuel Göttsching, Rosi Müller, Hartmut Enke, Harald Grosskopf and Klaus Schulze are joined by Jerry Berkers and Jürgen Dollase of Wallenstein, and Walter Westrupp of Witthüser & Westrupp for a double LP of wild folkloric ur-funk. "The whole of rock'n'roll in one double LP," says Julian Cope in 1996's essential kosmische text, Krautrocksampler (out of print, but available as a PDF online). Also essential is David Stubbs' Future Days: Krautrock And The Re-Building Of Modern Germany.





Sweet dreamer: guitar luminary Bill Frisell, "warm-hearted, collaborative and discreet", Rome, 2006.

Luciano Viti/Getty Images

Strength of strings

Authorised biography of a great, genial American guitarist makes the perfect accompaniment to his music. By **Ben Thompson**.

Bill Frisell: Beautiful Dreamer

★★★★

Philip Watson

FABER. £20

CONTENT WARNING: anyone coming to Philip Watson's meticulous and musicologically astute authorised biography of the guitarist Bill Frisell fresh from John Lurie's pungent and incident-packed memoir The History Of Bones needs to be aware that this New York downtown scene luminary's book is the opposite of that one. Yet, warm-hearted, collaborative, and discreet to the point of being almost ambient, Beautiful Dreamer also manages to be the perfect companion-piece to the music of its subject.

The young Frisell was first inspired to pick up a guitar as a child by the enthralling televisual spectacle of Mickey Mouse Club host Jimmie Dodd's magical Mousegetar. Perhaps in the hope of spicing up the unfailing wholesomeness of the creative odyssey that ensued, Beautiful Dreamer has been provocatively subtitled "The Guitarist Who Changed The Sound Of American Music".

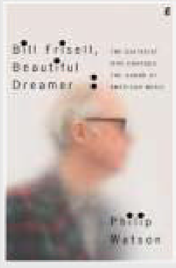
The definite article is a bit of a stretch there. Surely it should be "A Guitarist Who…", unless we are meant to believe that the fearlessly unobtrusive Frisell made a uniquely seismic impact which eluded Robert Johnson, Sister Rosetta Tharpe, Scotty Moore, Wes Montgomery, Jimi Hendrix, Sonny Sharrock, John Fahey, Eddie Hazel, Eddie Van Halen, Bob Mould, and/or any of the many other American guitarists with a more pressing claim to that exclusive title.

Watson's text itself generally eschews such compensatory hyperbole in favour of granular analysis, as he traces Frisell's evolution from shy Pat Metheny protégé, through the hard knocks finishing school of Paul Motian, to a memorable spell as nerdily virtuosic Bud Abbott to John Zorn's impish Lou Costello.

Those who like their postmodern jazz guitar talk leavened with a little human intrigue will enjoy the compressed psychodrama of Frisell's off/on bromance with super-controlling ECM supremo Manfred Eicher. "I remember him coming out of the control room and saying to me something like, 'Could you just try thinking about John Abercrombie?'" And long-term collaborator Kermit Driscoll also conjures a tantalising flash of steel, insisting that in his own quiet, genial way, Frisell could be "as mean as Buddy Rich".

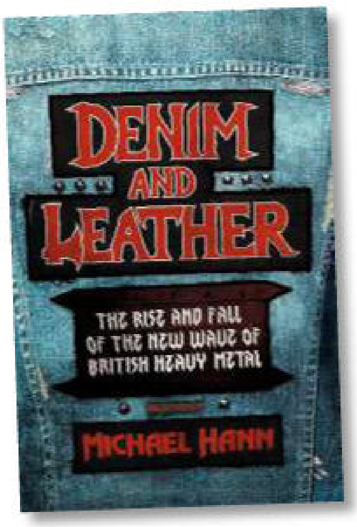
The "exclusive listening sessions", in which Watson chews the fat with Frisell's collaborators – from superfan Justin Vernon, AKA Bon Iver (who has That Was Then, his favourite track from the album *Good Dog, Happy Man*, tattooed on his back), to a waspish Paul Simon, to a downright sceptical Rhiannon Giddens – recall Watson's formative journalistic experiences as custodian of The Wire magazine's blindfold test. It's a risky move that throws up a nugget of pure gold from Van Dyke Parks, who offers the perfect summation of Frisell's less-is-more methodology: "Don't just do something, stand there."

"Superfan Justin Vernon got a tattoo of his favourite Frisell track."



WHAT WE'VE LEARNT

- Bill Frisell's father was a professor of biochemistry at the East Carolina University School Of Medicine who discovered a micro-organism named in his honour as the Frisellium.
- Returning the favour for the score Frisell composed for a Far Side TV special, the metaphysical cartoonist Gary Larson depicted his brain in a drawing as "a madcap laboratory full of tubes, flags, machines, an ice cream cone, a jack-in-the-box, and, high up, in a chair atop a ladder, a scientist in a lab coat and flippers feeding large black musical notes into a funnel."
- One of Frisell's less successful audio-visual entanglements was to contribute (at Hal Willner's request) to the soundtrack of the disastrous Bono/Wim Wenders movie vanity project The Million Dollar Hotel. The film's star Mel Gibson described it (at a promotional press conference) as being "as boring as a dog's ass".



Denim And Leather: The Rise And Fall Of The New Wave Of British Heavy Metal

★★★★

Michael Hann

CONSTABLE. £20

Heavy metal's early-'80s renaissance revisited.

Former Guardian music editor Michael Hann's oral history gallops along like Iron Maiden's early anthem Phantom Of The Opera. The story of the NWOBHM is told here by musicians, fans and critics. While the genre birthed Maiden and Def Leppard, and inspired a young Lars Ulrich to form Metallica, many acts failed miserably. It's almost painful to read how Diamond Head plucked defeat from the jaws of victory by keeping the singer's mum as their manager despite interest from AC/DC's handler. Hann captures the humour ("There were a lot of women," divulges Saxon's Steve 'Dobby' Dawson. "That's why I was a regular at the Department Of Urology in Sheffield") and the pathos ("Plumstead, for a few months at least, was the centre of rock," suggests one of Angel Witch), but never mocks. Instead, Denim And Leather celebrates the passion and joyful tribalism of the music and the times.

Mark Blake

Swell Maps: 1972-1980

★★★★

Jowe Head

SOUNDS ON PAPER. £24.99

Warm-hearted and entertaining insider account of Midlands DIY trailblazers.

Over the four decades since Swell Maps called it a day, a wide variety of musicians have cited them as an influence, but this is the first official band history. A fine companion piece to Nikki Sudden's autobiography The Last Bandit, bass player and fellow songwriter Jowe Head's book shines a considered light from another perspective on the complex origins and motivations of this grouping of friends, as they move from early-1970s tape experiments and Dadaist bedroom sound collages to a self-financed studio visit in 1977, then a string of ground-breaking independent releases via a Rough Trade distribution deal. They fell out, as old friends sometimes do, splitting during a 1980 tour of Italy. Beautifully illustrated, and accompanied by a six-track 7-inch single of rarities, ample space is given to the recollections of the other surviving band members, while Head's own are unfailingly informative and often wryly entertaining.

Max Décharné

Ten Thousand Apologies: Fat White Family And The Miracle Of Failure

★★★★

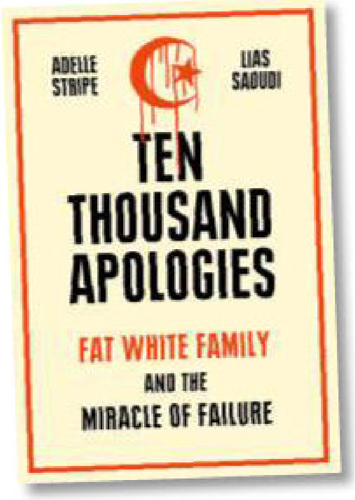
Adelle Stripe & Lias Saoudi

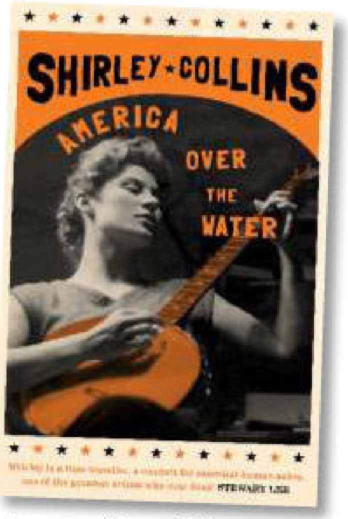
WHITE RABBIT. £20

Fat White Family bandleader's detailed co-autobiography.

Formed in 2011, Peckham-percolated Fat White Family are now available in surprisingly detailed non-fiction book form, despite warnings by displaced frontman Lias Kaci Saoudi (who co-authors with poet Adelle Stripe) that "fact has been used to make fiction." In fact, this fulsomely frightening-but-funny yarn reads as memorably as the band's lolloping, Aldi-burgling soundtrack sounds. Algerian-born Saoudi waxes proudly of his "ridiculous nose" and racist beatings during teenage years in Northern Ireland. Coalescing around like-minded lunatics in London, the rangy septet recreate Monty Python's Salad Days as a video, and experience an approximation of NME-sponsored indie cred. Ten Thousand Apologies builds a fastidious portrait of chaos, displacement and bad acid: the self-destructive Saoudi sees racism through "coal-black eyes" and daringly relates his excremental decision to "go Bobby Sands" at a gig in Sheffield. FWF emerge as vividly as an anecdote that leaves "Ninja Turtles bedsheets splattered in red."

Andrew Collins





America Over The Water

★★★★

Shirley Collins

WHITE RABBIT. £14.99

British folk treasure revisits her epic song searches through the US South.

It's 15 years since this was initially published and, aside from the astonishing revival of her own singing career, Collins has used the time to reflect on, re-evaluate and rejuvenate memories of the year-long collecting journey she took with Alan Lomax in her early twenties in 1959 through the Southern states of America. More recently she's written an excellent autobiography, but this still offers a breathless insight into her wondrous adventure, along with incidental insights into the mores of the time (including shocking racism in Alabama) and her own wide-eyed reactions to it all, not least in her relationship with Lomax, which she entertainingly reassesses in the introduction. Elsewhere, her first-hand accounts of close encounters with the likes of Mississippi Fred McDowell, Muddy Waters, Texas Gladden and Almeda Riddle, interspersed with personal reminiscences, make this book a timeless gem.

Colin Irwin

The Music And Noise Of The Stooges, 1967-71 Lost in the Future

★★★

Michael S Begnal

ROUTLEDGE. £120

Cultural studies/musicology treatment of The Stooges.

This isn't for everyone – not least because of the whopping £120 price tag (the ebook is £33). Academic in tone – the author teaches writing at Indiana's Ball State University – it frames The Stooges' output and achievement in terms of cultural and literary criticism and sound studies, citing Theodor Adorno, Jacques Attali and Pierre Bourdieu in particular to explore how a group seen as "commercial failures" in their own time become "consecrated" by future generations as punk incubators. Most interesting is Begnal's contextual analyses of the group as products of '60s social and political upheaval, who as scholars of jazz and blues were heavily steeped in the racial and cultural dialogues of the time. Within this he also dissects the relationship between market forces and the avant-garde, and the record industry's role as agents of capitalism and commodification.

Lois Wilson

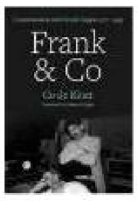
Frank & Co: Conversations With Frank Zappa 1977-1993

★★★

Co de Kloet

JAWBONE. £14.95

Multiple shades of Zappa, unexpurgated, from his unfashionable years.



Given that the author once made a four-hour radio documentary on The Mothers Of Invention's *Freak Out!*, it's no surprise that devotion and stamina are benchmarks of this 300-page anthology of encounters, interviews and assorted professional dealings with a sharp-eyed grump every bit the equal of Lou Reed and Bob Dylan. De Kloet earned Frank Zappa's trust early on, meeting him as a young fan reared on his father's copy of *Freak Out!*. Consequently, the book is virtually artist-sanctioned. Inevitably, Frank rails at the style-over-sound '80s and America's "religious mutants" driving the world towards Armageddon, views that have aged better than some of Zappa's Synclavier works and hamfisted Mothers remixes. The book also includes a manifesto of sorts ("I deal with all things which are wrong") and routine detail on songs, performing and bossing his own label. The 'bonus' conversations with Zappa's friend Pamela Zarubica, plus former Mothers Flo & Eddie and Jimmy Carl Black, add some much-needed perspective.

Mark Paytress

Metal gurus: Saxon help celebrate the passion and joyful tribalism of HM in Denim And Leather.

Avalon.red

End times: The Beatles in fiercely 'on' mode in Get Back.

Every Little Thing

Get Back makes it to Blu-Ray. Nearly eight hours later, **Danny Eccleston** feels like he was *in* The Beatles.

The Beatles: Get Back

★★★★★

Dir: Peter Jackson

DISNEY. BR

IN RECENT interviews with your writer in MOJO magazine, Glyn Johns and Ethan Russell – the engineer and photographer embedded with The Beatles throughout the January 1969 sessions that produced *Let It Be* – the album and the film – and now, Peter Jackson's epic Get Back reboot, professed themselves bemused. Yes, The Beatles were pretty great and all, but would viewers *really* sit through more than *seven hours* of what's long been characterised as the group's fatal wounding, if not its actual death rattle?

As the reports of MOJO readers' and Beatles fans' delight have underlined since the doc's November 25 debut on Disney+, the answer appears to be yes, and in many cases more than once. For while not without its longueurs (watching The Beatles organise their vocal harmonies, you're reminded more than once of the Heartbreak Hotel scene in Spinal Tap), the intimacy of the experience is addictive. You're in The Beatles' midst, smoking their Kents and drinking their Skol, gaping at the inspired takes, cringing as they bog themselves down in inferior material, sensing the minutest shifts in the political temperature between four lads who shook the world but find that adulthood leaves less and less space for their brothers and their individual emotional and creative needs.

It's not always comfortable viewing. The concern that Jackson might soft-pedal Harrison's flit, or the run-up to it, proves unfounded. The niggles over riffs and harmonies are all there, and there's a beautifully edited segment, switching between the faces of Harrison, Lennon and McCartney as the latter two bond through a bash at Two Of Us, where you really feel the pain of the youngest Beatle, locked out of the love-in. Meanwhile, it's hard not to be as exasperated as McCartney or the director of the 1969 footage, Michael Lindsay-Hogg (perma-chomping on an absurd stogie), as they try to persuade the others to end the project with a live show commensurate with The Beatles' stature. As the camera lingers, in the wake of Harrison's departure, on a visibly upset McCartney, you realise why he won't let it lie. His big finale is not just for a TV show or a film but for The Beatles *in toto*. Please let it not end like *this*.

While the atmosphere between The Beatles is almost invariably respectful and good-humoured – as McCartney notes, there are no "earth-splitting rows" – the end times theme is inescapable. We hear that the group has already discussed a "divorce" ("Who gets the kids?" John asks; Paul drolly suggests Lennon-McCartney's song publisher, Dick James). All appear to agree that they've lacked direction since manager "Mr Epstein"'s death in August 1967, and there's much gallows humour regarding their Apple organisation's bottomless money-pit, exemplified by "Magic Alex" Mardas's comically inexhaustible supply of technological white elephants (on camera, Lennon takes delivery of a ridiculous bass with a revolving, double-sided neck), all prototyped on The Beatles' dollar. Meanwhile, lurking like an off-stage villain is Allen Klein – soon to take over The Beatles' management, to McCartney's horror – who is conducting meetings with Lennon even as the Get Back/Let It Be work continues.

The claustrophobia of Beatle life is another keening note. The band read aloud from newspaper articles about their imminent break-up or unwelcome transformation into "weirdies" – the funny voices do not fully disguise their dismay. And their otherness is underlined as Lennon arrives to work at Savile Row in a vast white Rolls with a TV aerial on top (it gets a parking ticket). Conversely, there's much focus on their normality. The Beatles munch toast and discuss last night's telly – Lennon is thoroughly taken by what he saw of Fleetwood Mac. There are no airs or graces, or only in jest as Lennon counters a note of constructive criticism from Glyn Johns with a cheery, "Don't come it, fuckface!" Their partners mingle happily, and there's a lovely moment where Paul's soon-to-be wife Linda turns up with daughter Heather and everyone from Ringo to roadie Mal Evans is delighted to entertain her. While it should be remembered that Get Back is an official Apple/Beatles product and would have gone through an exhaustive approval process involving all the Beatles or their estates, it's important to note that Yoko's permanent presence at the sessions, so often assumed to be a bone of contention, is barely remarked upon – except when McCartney notes that it would be absurd for future commentators to suggest that The Beatles broke up "because Yoko sat on an amp". There are countless gags and cracks and reams of Beatlese. Ringo farts, and immediately owns up.

All this *stuff* – this accumulation of action, inaction and interaction, steeped in character and context – builds into a warm portrait of four men at a crossroads; things will never be the same for them after this. It's fascinating, but if viewers return to their Get Back Blu-Rays like Beatles fans will always return to, say, *Revolver*, it will be for the tangible and evident joy the band share in each other's music-making. There's a take of I've Got A Feeling at Apple Studios, the first with Billy Preston on Fender Rhodes, that's so instantly electrifying it seems to light up The Beatles' faces, and a Get Back – the first where Ringo introduces that familiar cantering beat – that makes you thrill at the terrifying proximity of what is genius in music and what is merely good. Harrison, restored and reconciled for now, is the one who suggests Get Back should be released instantly, as a single.

Then there's the entirety of the Savile Row rooftop concert – the compromise solution that delivers something of the "payoff" that McCartney's been seeking – during which The Beatles are so fiercely 'on' you realise what they've been missing all along: an audience, some jeopardy, and a proper deadline. After multiple Get Backs, I've Got A Feelings and Don't Bring Me Downs – a Dig A Pony and even One After 909 – you're praying they manage another song before the police shut them down. It's that exciting.

Much earlier in the film, after observing McCartney perform some magic at the keys, Ringo tells the camera, "I'd watch an hour of him just playing piano." Some of us might even stretch to 7:43.

> "The intimacy of the experience is addictive."

BEATLES
GET BACK

WHAT WE'VE LEARNT

- Paul's maddest idea for their abandoned TV Special: that The Beatles share the studio with a news team reporting live from all over the world. The final item: "The Beatles have broken up!"
- They actually did consider recording properly at Twickenham (even though Glyn Johns says they didn't). We see George shipping in his own Studer reel-to-reel.
- George's All Things Must Pass was spine-tingling from the start. Why couldn't Paul and John see it?

Photo courtesy of Apple Corps Ltd

ALEX LIPINSKI
LONG WAY TO GO

The new single from Alex Lipinski, **'Long Way To Go'**
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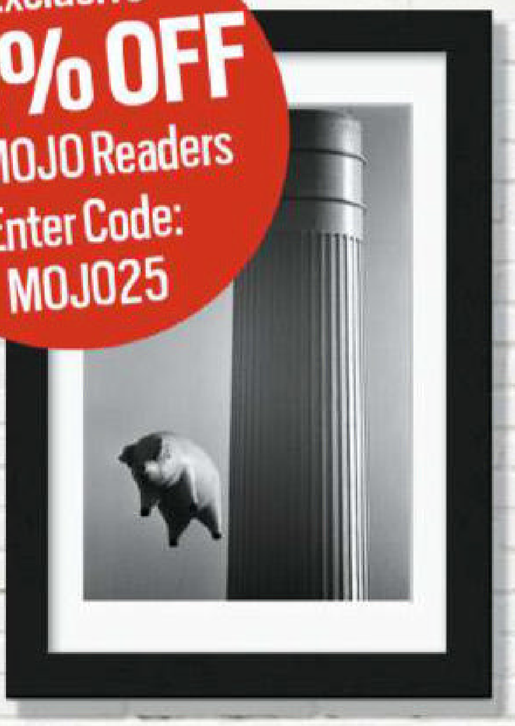

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Tamla-Motown chartbuster: R. Dean Taylor, runnin' up a world insane.

Detroit Wanted Him

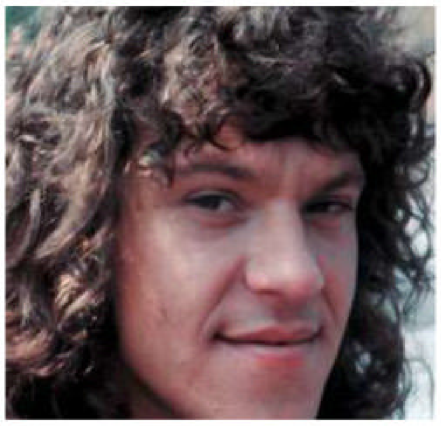
Motown-signed singer, songwriter, producer and dramatist **R. Dean Taylor** left us on January 7.

"I WRITE ABOUT real-life things," R. Dean Taylor told Hit Parader in 1972. "Songs of the Shakespearean thing and the anti-hero, the hopelessness of life." Born Richard Dean Taylor on May 11, 1939, he made his singing debut aged 12 and played in country acts in his native Toronto. After scoring local hits including 1961 debut At The High School Dance, he was temporarily diverted working "a non-creative job" at the Vickers & Benson advertising agency. Then in 1963 an ad-agency friend arranged an audition at Detroit's new label Motown.

At his Motown interview, Taylor gelled with Brian Holland, and joined label subsidiary V.I.P. as a singer and songwriter. Osmosing composition, studio wisdom and production skills from the Holland-Dozier-Holland writing team, Taylor also recalled playing tambourine on songs including The Four Tops' Standing In The Shadows Of Love and Reach Out (I'll Be There). When Holland-Dozier-Holland quit Motown in 1967, Taylor was one of The Clan who Berry Gordy looked to to keep the hits coming: he obliged by co-writing The Supremes' 1968 Number 1 Love Child and 1969 hit I'm Livin' In Shame.

His own career as a writer and producer was also on the up: in 1968 Gotta See Jane had gone Top 20 in Britain, while 1970's murder/fugitive drama Indiana Wants Me, released on Motown's rock label Rare Earth, was a Top 5 hit in the US and, on Tamla Motown, the UK. Seven years after its original release, Northern soul acclaim made H-D-H co-write There's A Ghost In My House a UK Top 3 success in 1974 (the song would be a 1987 Top 30 hit when it was covered by The Fall, who also recorded a version of Gotta See Jane). Yet in real time, further singles including 1971's suicide song Candy Apple Red failed to chart, and Taylor's hopes to make a film based on Indiana Wants Me entitled Tears On A Golden Circle went unrealised. Following 1970's *I Think, Therefore I Am*, his last solo LP was 1975's *L.A. Sunset*. He later ran his own Jane Records label, worked in his home studio in Los Angeles, and worked on his memoirs.

Ian Harrison



Michael Lang

Woodstock promoter

BORN 1944

BROOKLYN-BORN Michael Lang was running a head shop in Florida when he started co-promoting gigs: an early success was the 1968 Pop And Underground Festival in Miami, when acts including Hendrix, The Mothers and Chuck Berry entertained an attendance of 25,000. After moving to Woodstock, he and three other promoters staged the moment-defining "Aquarian Exposition" at Max Yasgur's farm, where 400,000 freaks watched CSNY, Jefferson Airplane, The Who, Sly Stone and many others over three days in August 1969 (the 1970 documentary won an Oscar). After helping promote Woodstock '94 and another disastrous event in 1999, his plan to stage Woodstock 50 in 2019 collapsed at the eleventh hour. Lang, who never changed his hairstyle, also ran the Just Sunshine label (his signings included Betty Davis and Karen Dalton), managed Joe Cocker, worked in film production and continued to work in event management. An idealist, his memoir, The Road To Woodstock, was published in 2009. "It was the time of all our lives," he wrote.

Clive Prior

Getty, Alamy

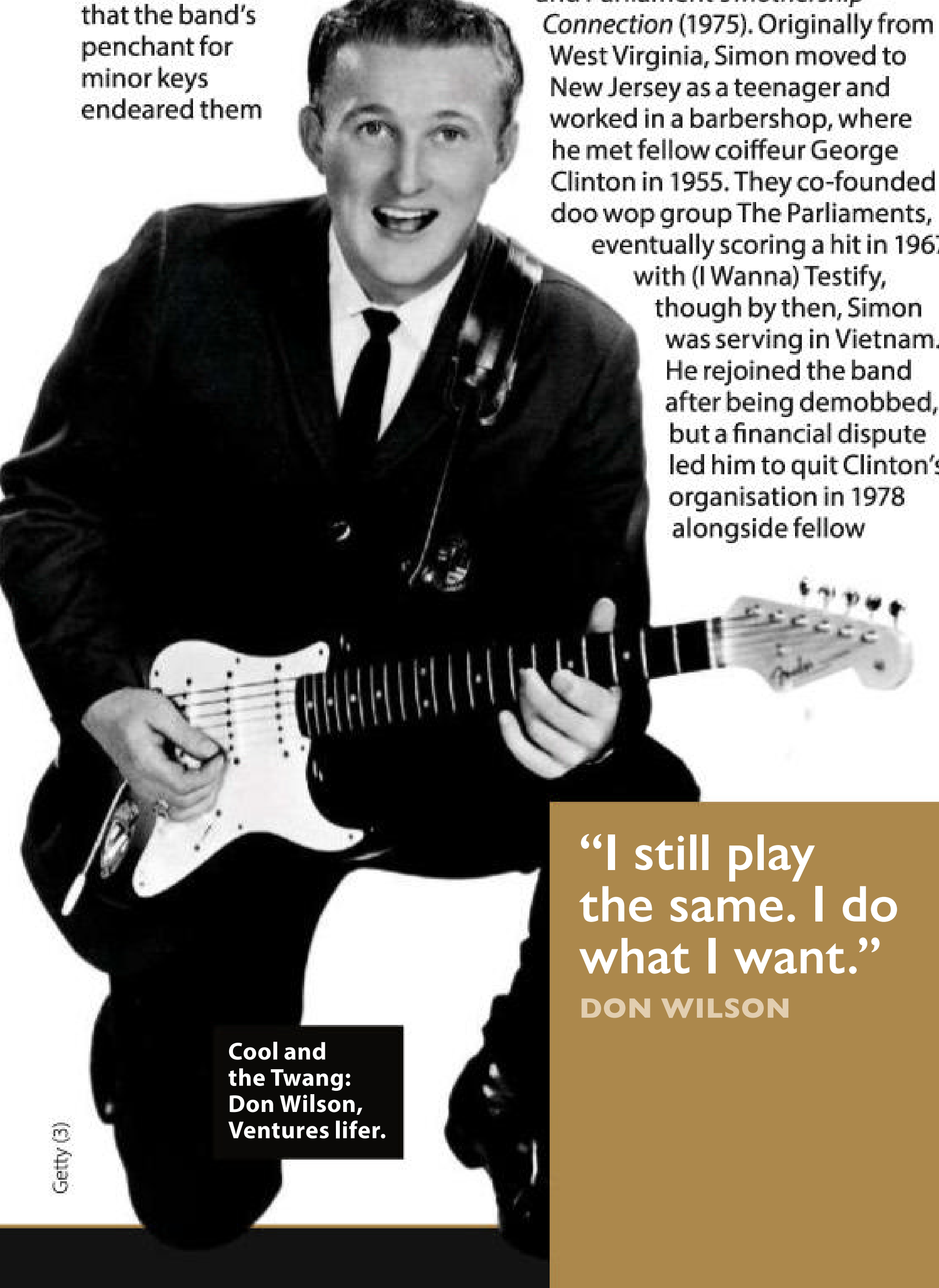
Don Wilson

Ventures guitarist

BORN 1933

A Number 2 US hit and a UK Number 8 in summer 1960, The Ventures' twanging proto-surf take of the Chet Atkins-popularised jazz tune Walk, Don't Run is one of the all-time great guitar instrumentals. Born in Tacoma, Washington, Don Wilson had played the tiple and listened to country music before being hipped to guitar jazz while serving in the military in West Germany in the mid '50s. A fan of Les Paul and Duane Eddy, in 1958 he met guitarist Bob Bogle, who he practised with in downtime on the Seattle building sites where they worked – he later recalled developing a percussive rhythm style to make up for the lack of a drummer. After recruiting Nokie Edwards on bass, and with the band name suggested by Wilson's mum and future fan club president Josie, The Ventures were open for business in 1959. Scoring six US Top 20 singles in all – with Edwards and Bogle having swapped roles, their cover of the theme to Hawaii Five-0 reached US Number 4 in 1969 – they achieved full power as a killer live band when drummer Mel Taylor joined. While the group's success at home had waned by the turn of the '70s, they remained huge in Japan, where they outsold The Beatles, toured annually and were decorated by the Emperor (Wilson posited that the band's penchant for minor keys endeared them to Japanese audiences). More than 60 studio albums and dozens of live LPs show a group adept at surf rock, country, outer-space concepts and even psychedelia, with names paying homage including Carl Wilson, George Harrison and Keith Moon, who called 1964's *The Ventures In Space* his favourite LP. Wilson, by accounts the joker of the group, was the longest-serving Venture, playing with the band in varying formations and at their 2008 Rock and Roll Hall of Fame induction – "I still play the same," he said in 2006, "I do what I want and I have a good feel for it" – until he bowed out after a tour of Japan in 2015. In 2020 Wilson co-produced the documentary The Ventures: Stars On Guitars. A new line-up, with Mel Taylor's son Leon on drums, carries on The Ventures' legacy.

Ian Harrison



Cool and the Twang: Don Wilson, Ventures lifer.

Getty (3)

> "I still play the same. I do what I want."
>
> DON WILSON

Calvin Simon

P-Funk Mothership crew member

BORN 1942

A singer with Parliament-Funkadelic, Calvin Simon's gospel-honed vocals appeared on several of the aggregation's landmark albums, including Funkadelic's *Maggot Brain* (1971) and Parliament's *Mothership Connection* (1975). Originally from West Virginia, Simon moved to New Jersey as a teenager and worked in a barbershop, where he met fellow coiffeur George Clinton in 1955. They co-founded doo wop group The Parliaments, eventually scoring a hit in 1967 with (I Wanna) Testify, though by then, Simon was serving in Vietnam. He rejoined the band after being demobbed, but a financial dispute led him to quit Clinton's organisation in 1978 alongside fellow singers Fuzzy Haskins and Grady Thomas; the three resurfaced in 1980 using the Funkadelic name for the album *Connections And Disconnections*. After that, Simon co-led the Parliaments alumni band Original P and released two solo gospel albums. Bootsy Collins announced Simon's death on Instagram, calling his friend and bandmate a "cool classic guy."

Charles Waring

Rio grande: Elza Soares, from favela child to Brazilian royalty.

Elza Soares

Brazilian superstar

BORN 1930

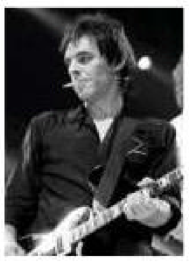
Born into a favela hardship few of us could imagine – by 21, she'd given birth seven times and been widowed – Soares would become one of Brazil's greatest stars, using her peerless voice to push her talent ever further out. Never satisfied with being labelled Rio's queen of samba, she excelled at big-band samba, acoustic bossa nova and, in later years, avant-garde rock. Her golden period covered 1960-75, though an affair with married footballer Garrincha led to her being publicly ostracised, and she barely recorded in the 25 years that followed. Her 21st-century rediscovery saw her mixing samba with electronica; supported by Caetano Veloso and Jorge Ben Jor, she became an unignorable voice for women's and LGBTQ rights, and an electrifying multidisciplinary star. Her 2016 album *A Mulher Do Fim Do Mundo* was a MOJO album of the year.

David Hutcheon

Robin Le Mesurier

Charmed rocker

BORN 1953



Of impeccable British showbiz pedigree – his mother was Carry On film matriarch Hattie Jacques and his dad was Dad's Army's John Le Mesurier – Robin chose music as his vessel, having been encouraged by his jazz-loving father taking him to Ronnie Scott's. A blues aficionado, at 16 he was a member of Reign, whose 1970 ballad Line Of Least Resistance was written by The Yardbirds' Jim McCarty and Keith Relf. In 1973 he joined Mike Batt's furry novelty band The Wombles as Wellington, but had to leave the masked and anonymous act when the police raided the parental home and found a joint (he was fined £20). He later played with Lion, Limey and Air Supply, joined Rod Stewart's band as guitarist and writer from 1980 to 1986, and was Johnny Hallyday's music director from 1994 until the French superstar's death in 2017. He also played sessions for Rita Coolidge, Ronnie Wood and Sylvie Vartan, co-composed the music for his father's 1978 spoken-word album *The Velveteen Rabbit*, formed Farm Dogs with Bernie Taupin and Jim Cregan and, in 2015, played with the reunited Faces. His memoir, A Charmed Rock'N'Roll Life, was published in 2017.

Clive Prior

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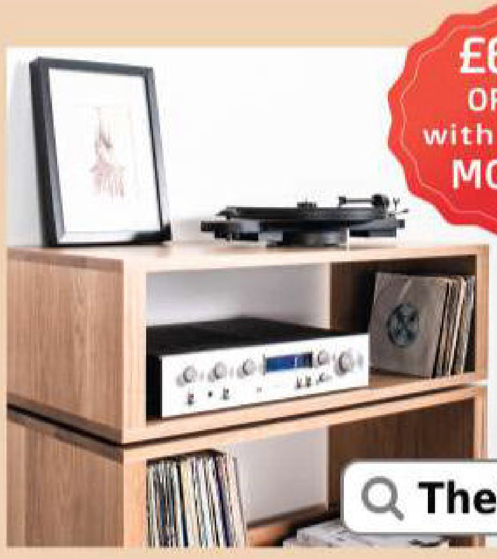

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BOB MARLEY
Ghost
MISFITS
JOY DIVISION
SLAYER
GRATEFUL DEAD
The JAM

Burke Shelley

Budgie frontman of strong convictions

BORN 1950

Learning guitar via Bert Weedon's Play In A Day, Cardiff's Burke Shelley quit his quantity surveyor studies and switched to bass after seeing Dave Edmunds-fronted blues act Love Sculpture in 1967. He formed power-trio Budgie that same year, his gutsy tenor/alto and love of wordplay distinguishing a revered proto-metal triptych comprised of 1971's *Budgie*, 1972's *Squawk* and 1973's *Never Turn Your Back On A Friend*. Later a committed Christian, Shelley loathed metal's dance with the devil and hair metal's posturing, but that didn't dissuade Van Halen, Metallica and Iron Maiden from covering Budgie songs. Burke fronted the band until 2010, when damage caused by an aortic aneurysm compromised his voice. He passed in his sleep at Cardiff's Heath Hospital aged 71. "I'm not frightened of dying" he said in 2020. "I know where I'm going."

James McNair

Rosa Lee Hawkins

Dixie Cups singer

BORN 1945

New Orleans singers Rosa Lee Hawkins, her elder sister Barbara Ann and their cousin Joan Marie Johnson were billed as Little Miss And The Muffets before becoming The Dixie Cups, after a brand of disposable paper tumblers. The first release on Leiber and Stoller's Red Bird label, debut 45 Chapel Of Love was a US Number 1 in May 1964. They followed up with Number 12 hit People Say and May '65's Iko Iko, a Number 20 success. It was their last hit: Rosa Lee later worked in modelling and make-up, but continued to sing with Barbara Ann as The Dixie Cups, joined by childhood friend Athelgra Neville. Hawkins' 2021 memoir Chapel Of Love revealed a harrowing tale of abuse by manager Joe Jones, but she stressed she sang from the heart always: "When we walk on-stage," she told The Arizona Republic, "we leave him behind."

Ian Harrison

Get the message: the fruitful James Mtume.

James Mtume

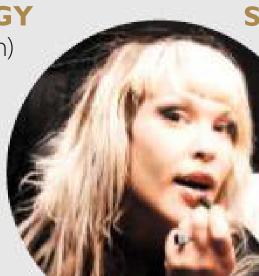
Sophistifunk mover

BORN 1946

Raised in a jazz environment in Philadelphia, James Forman was given his Swahili name (meaning 'messenger') as a member of black nationalists the US Organisation in the late '60s, when he made his recording debut on the 1970 LP *Kawaida*. In New York he went on to play percussion with Freddie Hubbard, McCoy Tyner, Miles Davis and Roberta Flack (for whom he co-wrote 1977's hit Donnie Hathaway duet The Closer I Get To You) before founding "sophistifunk" group Mtume in 1978. In 1983 the band's much-sampled Juicy Fruit was an R&B chart Number 1. He also won a Grammy for co-writing Stephanie Mills' 1980 US Top 10 hit Never Knew Love Like This Before with Reggie Lucas, with whom he produced albums for The Spinners, Lou Rawls and Phyllis Hyman. He later produced Mary J. Blige, wrote for TV and worked in talk radio in New York.

Clive Prior

THEY ALSO SERVED

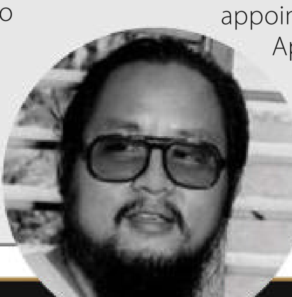


DETROIT COBRAS voice **RACHEL NAGY** (right, b.unknown) worked as a stripper and a butcher before joining what became garage-soul outfit **The Detroit Cobras** in 1994 – reputedly taking to the stage without ever having sung in public before. Exhuming forgotten pearls from the substrata of rock'n'roll and R&B, the group transcended their 'covers band' tag with guts and aplomb, releasing five LPs. Friend and collaborator **Greg Cartwright** wrote of her "vitality, her fierce intensity and her vulnerability".

VERSATILE vocalist/songwriter **DAVID LASLEY** (b.1947) sang with the likes of **Aretha Franklin**, the **Ramones** and (alongside **Luther Vandross**) **Chic**, and wrote songs for **Dusty Springfield**, **Boz Scaggs**, **Whitney Houston**, **Chaka Khan**, **Feargal Sharkey** and others. A key voice in **James Taylor**'s band from 1977, the Detroit native also recorded with his band **Rosie** and solo, mentored **Lenny Kravitz**, and appeared in 2013's backing singers doc 20 Feet From Stardom.

SINGER **ROBIN SARSTEDT** (b.1944) was brother to teen idol **Eden Kane** and Where Do You Go To My Lovely? hitmaker **Peter Sarstedt**. The younger sibling, he worked with **Joe Meek** (as Wes Sands), played with big-in-Sweden Londoners **The Deejays** (as Clive Sands), released solo albums (as Clive Sarstedt) and recorded 1973's *Worlds Apart Together* LP with the **Sarstedt Brothers**, before having his sole UK hit with 1976's Number 3 cover of Hoagy Carmichael's My Reisistance Is Low. He had further chart success in the Low Countries.

FOOD RECORDS executive **ANDY ROSS** (b.1956) epitomised the intrepid UK independent A&R man of the '80s/90s, a job requiring boundless enthusiasm as well as musical vision – qualities Ross deployed in 1990 when signing a shambolic quartet called **Blur**. Erstwhile Sounds journalist Ross also mentored **Crazyhead**, **Jesus Jones**, **Dubstar** and **Idlewild**. His death from cancer on January 25 prompted many tributes, none more heartfelt than Food founder Dave Balfe's, who called him, "wry and dryly funny, a uniquely talented spotter of talent… he was a great friend."



REGGAE GUITAR/KEYBOARD **MIKEY 'MAO' CHUNG** (below, b.1950) played with keyboardist/producer brother Geoffrey in bands including the **Mighty Mystics** in the '60s: both joined **The Now Generation**, house band of Kingston's Federal label, from 1970. He later worked with Jamaican talent including **Inner Circle**, **Peter Tosh**, **Sly & Robbie**, **Lee Perry**, **Black Uhuru** and **Grace Jones**, and internationally with **Serge Gainsbourg**, **Marianne Faithfull** and **Joe Cocker**.

BEATLES FILM collaborator **DENIS O'DELL** (b.1923) was "fixer" and associate producer on A Hard Day's Night in 1964 (a job taken on the advice of his children) and producer of 1967's Magical Mystery Tour. He was later appointed head of Apple's film division, though his plans for a Beatles-starring version of Lord Of The Rings was torpedoed by JRR Tolkien. He was name-checked (as Denis O'Bell) in You Know My Name (Look Up The Number), the B-side of Let It Be, the last 45 released in The Beatles' lifetime.

TROMBONE/KEYS/FLUTE player and arranger **DICK HALLIGAN** (b.1943) co-founded New York jazz-rockers **Blood, Sweat & Tears** in 1967. After winning two Grammys for his work with the group, he left in 1971, having already moved into TV and film scores. In the '80s he composed for jazz and orchestra, and later adapted his memoir Musical Being into a live show.

PHOTOGRAPHER **STEVE SCHAPIRO** (b.1934) began his career in 1961: in addition to photographing America's civil rights movement and numerous '70s film sets of note, he will be remembered for his LP covers for Riverside and portraiture of musicians including **The Velvet Underground**, **Barbra Streisand** and, in particular, **David Bowie**, whose *Low* and *Station To Station* LP sleeves he shot.

DOO-WOP COMPOSER **FRED PARRIS** (below, b.1936) sang with **The Scarlets** before founding **The Five Satins** in New Haven, Connecticut in 1955. In 1956 he sang lead on the sublime smash hit In The Still Of The Night, but army service obliged his exit. He returned in 1965, leading the group through local acclaim and rock'n'roll nostalgia. He also recorded LPs with **Black Satin** (1976) and **Fred Parris And The Satins** (1982).

GUITARIST **BRUCE ANDERSON** (b.1949) founded two-drummer, full-on art-rock cults **MX-80** (originally MX-80 Sound) in Bloomington, Indiana in 1974. They released records on Island and The Residents' Ralph label, covered Grand Funk Railroad, and (as MX-80 Sound) released their last album, *Hougher House*, on January 21. Friend and collaborator Steve Albini hailed Anderson, who worked at San Francisco's Amoeba Records for more than 25 years, as "an effortless virtuoso with an ear for the raw and jagged." A final MX-80 LP, *Better Than Life*, awaits release.

Jenny Bulley, Keith Cameron and Ian Harrison

© Adrian Boot, Getty (3)

tamla motown
Tamla Motown
EARL VAN DYKE
MOTOWN
DUSTY
SUPREMES

Hitsville UK: (clockwise from left) Motortown Revue stars The Supremes on the Ready Steady Go! special; The Miracles and others arrive at London Airport, March 15, 1965; the RSG! special, with Smokey Robinson singing and Dusty Springfield compering; hit 45 Stop! In The Name Of Love; (below) Motown boss Berry Gordy and Martha & The Vandellas' Dancing In The Street.

MARCH 1965

...the Motortown Revue hits Britain!

MARCH 20 The Finsbury Park Astoria, AKA The Rainbow Theatre, is an evangelical church these days. But on an early spring night in 1965– over two shows at 6.40pm and 9.10pm – it was witness to a different kind of divine inspiration. The Motortown Revue, a star-packed Motown package including The Supremes, Stevie Wonder, Smokey Robinson & The Miracles and Martha & The Vandellas, all backed by the Earl Van Dyke Sextet, was playing its first UK tour date.

Soul fans had been in a state of intense excitement for weeks. When the tour party, accompanied by Motown kingpin Berry Gordy Jr., arrived at London Airport on March 15, they were met by a delegation of the self-styled "Swingers and Friends" of the British Tamla Motown Appreciation Society, headed by fanclub president and soul proselytiser Dave Godin. "I was sick and tired of second-rate British acts ripping off the originals with fifth-rate cover versions," Godin told soul mag Manifesto a year before his death in 2004, referring to the Anglo beat group habit of covering Motown hits. "Some of us over here knew a damned fine record when we heard it."

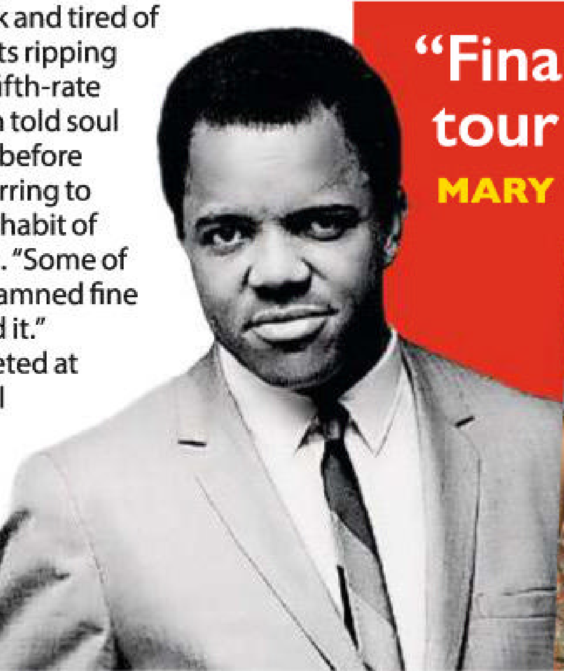
With the party billeted at the Cumberland Hotel near Marble Arch, the trip had another important objective. After dispensing with licensing deals, this month saw the launch of the UK Tamla Motown label with a special showcase at the headquarters of new partners EMI on March 19. Another promotional coup would be the Ready Steady Go! TV broadcast, when the touring group, plus a specially parachuted-in Temptations, were filmed live at the Rediffusion Television Studios in Wembley on March 18. Entitled The Motown Special, the plan was orchestrated by programme editor and Motown society member Vicki Wickham, who put it to executive producer Elkan Allan that a half-hour of Detroit's finest was exactly what the kids were crying out for. Allan agreed, and suggested Wickham's pal and fellow soul nut Dusty Springfield compere. "Dusty thought she'd died and gone to heaven," Wickham told 2009 BBC doc The Motown Invasion. "It was her idea of absolute bliss."

> "Financially the tour was a flop."
> **MARY WILSON**

Yet the show would not be broadcast until April 28, after the 21-date/two-shows-a-night tour had finished. When it came to bums on seats, even an operator like Gordy was not immune from hubris. Dave Godin had Gordy's ear, and some commentators have suggested that he'd exaggerated the popularity of Motown in Britain. Consequently, from the first date in London, the Motortown Revue was not distinguished by packed halls. In her memoir Dreamgirl: My Life As A Supreme, Mary Wilson recalled it as "the infamous ghost tour… for the first time in as long as many of us could remember, we were playing to half-filled houses… financially the tour was a flop."

She also noted that the artists found the British food bland, the toilet paper waxy ("this wasn't anyone's idea of civilisation") and the crowds unwilling to cheer until a song was over. Yet with chart stars Georgie Fame & The Blue Flames added to the bill, they struggled through the basic amenities and cold and travelled on a 52-seater charabanc, joking, smoking and gambling their way down interminable A-roads as they zig-zagged between such hitherto unknown temples of soul as the Glasgow Odeon, Bournemouth Winter Gardens and, prophetically, the Wigan ABC (Gordy and The Supremes switched to a limo after one gruelling road-slog).

Eyewitnesses including Tony Blackburn, soul scribe Adam White and Wickham didn't dispute the low turnouts, but remained in awe of the show, complete with elegant stagewear, sharp dance routines and one killer song after another. With eminent Funk Brother Van Dyke and his crack band



Tamla Motown
mono
Martha and the Vandellas

Getty (8), Alamy

starting proceedings, Martha & The Vandellas and Georgie Fame played the opening half, followed by Smokey Robinson & The Miracles, Stevie Wonder and headliners The Supremes in the second.

The dates, apart from two shows at the Paris Olympia in April, went unrecorded. But a taste of what the Motortown Revue must have been like survived. The Ready Steady Go! special, broadcast after the party was back in the States, remains a thing of wonder. With a Detroit skyline and the acts' names in lights for a stage set, the programme's many highlights included The Supremes' Stop! In The Name Of Love, The Vandellas' Dancing In The Street, The Temptations' My Girl, Dusty and Martha Reeves cracking up with laughter singing Wishin' And Hopin', and the whole crew doing Mickey's Monkey en masse, with lead vocals by Smokey, harmonica by Stevie and an outbreak of the Jerk dance routine. The mind-blown schoolkids clapping in the audience seem unable to believe what they're seeing.

Driven by TV, Motown's chain reaction had begun. On March 31, US Number 1 Stop! In The Name Of Love entered the UK charts at 44, rising to Number 7 on April 21. The following year, Tamla Motown acts such as The Four Tops, The Temptations and The Isley Brothers were also scoring massive hits in the UK and beyond. The disappointing receipts of the Motortown Revue had been worth it, it seemed. As Gordy noted in Andy Neill's RSG! history The Weekend Starts Here: "If Motown in America was born in Detroit, Motown in the rest of the world was born in the UK."

Ian Harrison

CBS
BOB DYLAN
SUBTERRANEAN HOMESICK BLUES
(Dylan)
201753
MADE IN ENGLAND

Bob Dylan detonates his "psychic explosion".

Dylan's first US hit 45

MARCH 8 **Bob Dylan's beatnik-rap Subterranean Homesick Blues is released. It's taken from the half-electric/half-acoustic LP *Bringing It All Back Home*, which follows on March 22 and takes his lyrics to new surrealistic heights: in the sleevenotes, he asserts, "My poems are written in a rhythm of unpoetic distortion… with a melodic purring line of descriptive hollowness – seen at times through dark sunglasses an' other forms of psychic explosion." This month he plays dates in Canada and California with Joan Baez. In May, Subterranean Homesick Blues reaches Number 39 on the US singles charts and Number 9 in the UK. The same month, D.A. Pennebaker films the song's pioneering promo clip in an alley near London's Savoy Hotel during the singer's UK tour.**

Poupée scoop: France Gall and songwriter Serge Gainsbourg victorious at Eurovision 1965.

FRANCE GALL WINS EUROVISION

MARCH 20 Held at Sala di Concerto della RAI auditorium in Naples, what was then called the Eurovision Song Contest Grand Prix is won by Luxembourg's France Gall. The victorious tune is the rollicking, subversive Poupée de Cire, Poupée de Son, composed by Serge Gainsbourg, who then finds himself in demand as a yé-yé pop songwriter. Britain comes second with Kathy Kirby's I Belong, with orchestral direction by early Mellotron adopter Eric Robinson, while France's Guy Mardel's N'Avoue Jamais (Never Admit) comes third. In all, 18 singers, including Austria's Udo Jürgens, Ireland's Butch Moore and, from communist Yugoslavia, Vice Vukov, take part. Gall recorded an Italian version in Rome on the way to Naples, which is released soon after.

ALSO ON!

STONES ON TOP

6 **The Rolling Stones** (above) are back at the top of the UK LP charts with their second album… *No.2*. Three Jagger-Richards originals are included. On March 24, 45 The Last Time also begins a three-week stint at Number 1.

RISING TRAMP

19 **Roger Miller**'s hobo anthem King Of The Road peaks at Number 4 in the US. It enters the UK charts at 35 on March 24, rising to Number 1 in May.

FREEDOM MARCH

25 The **Reverend Martin Luther King Jr.** finishes leading an estimated 25,000 civil rights marchers on the four-day walk from Selma, Alabama to the state capital Montgomery, where he delivers his celebrated "How Long, Not Long" speech.

FABS TAPES

27 Press notices appear offering interview tapes for sale of **The Beatles** talking to "Derek Taylor, their friend, former publicity officer and press agent… there is wit, sarcasm and common sense," in the Bahamas. The following month, ads advise they are no longer available.

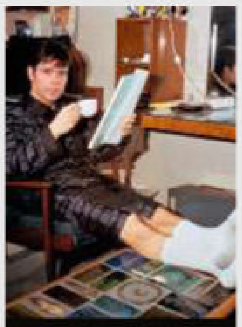
NASHVILLE BLUES

29 **RCA Victor**'s new Nashville studio opens with a party attended by **Chet Atkins**, **Al Hirt** and others. The Nashville Building And Construction Trades Council picket the event, protesting that a non-union contractor built the facility.

TOP TEN

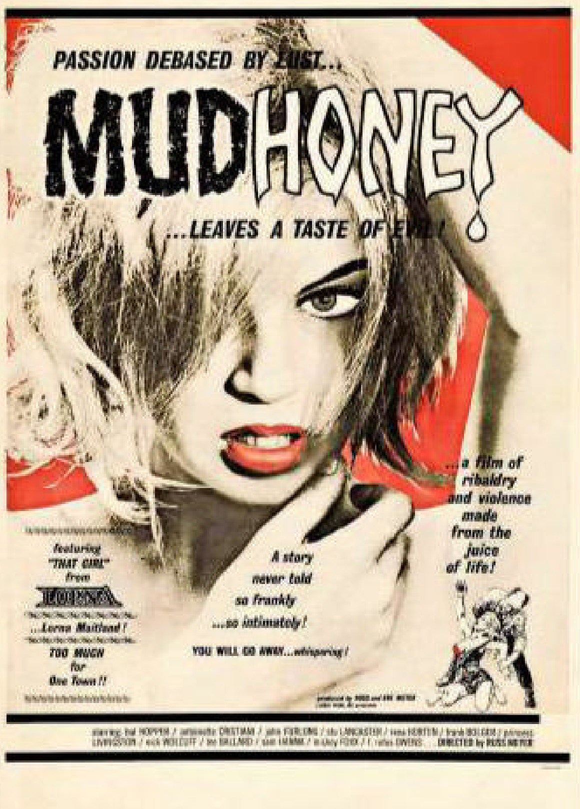
SINGAPORE SINGLES MARCH 6

1. **I COULD EASILY FALL (IN LOVE WITH YOU)** CLIFF RICHARD AND THE SHADOWS COLUMBIA
2. **YOU'RE MY REMEDY** THE MARVELETTES TAMLA
3. **COME SEE ABOUT ME** THE SUPREMES MOTOWN
4. **YOU NEVER CAN TELL** CHUCK BERRY CHESS
5. **GONE, GONE, GONE** THE EVERLY BROTHERS WARNER BROS
6. **ROCK AND ROLL MUSIC** THE BEATLES PARLOPHONE
7. **GENIE WITH THE LIGHT BROWN LAMP** THE SHADOWS COLUMBIA
8. **NO TIME** DAVE DEE, DOZY, BEAKY, MICK AND TICH FONTANA
9. **SEE YOU LATER, ALLIGATOR** MILLIE SMALL FONTANA
10. **COME GO WITH ME** SUGAR'N'SPICE LOMA

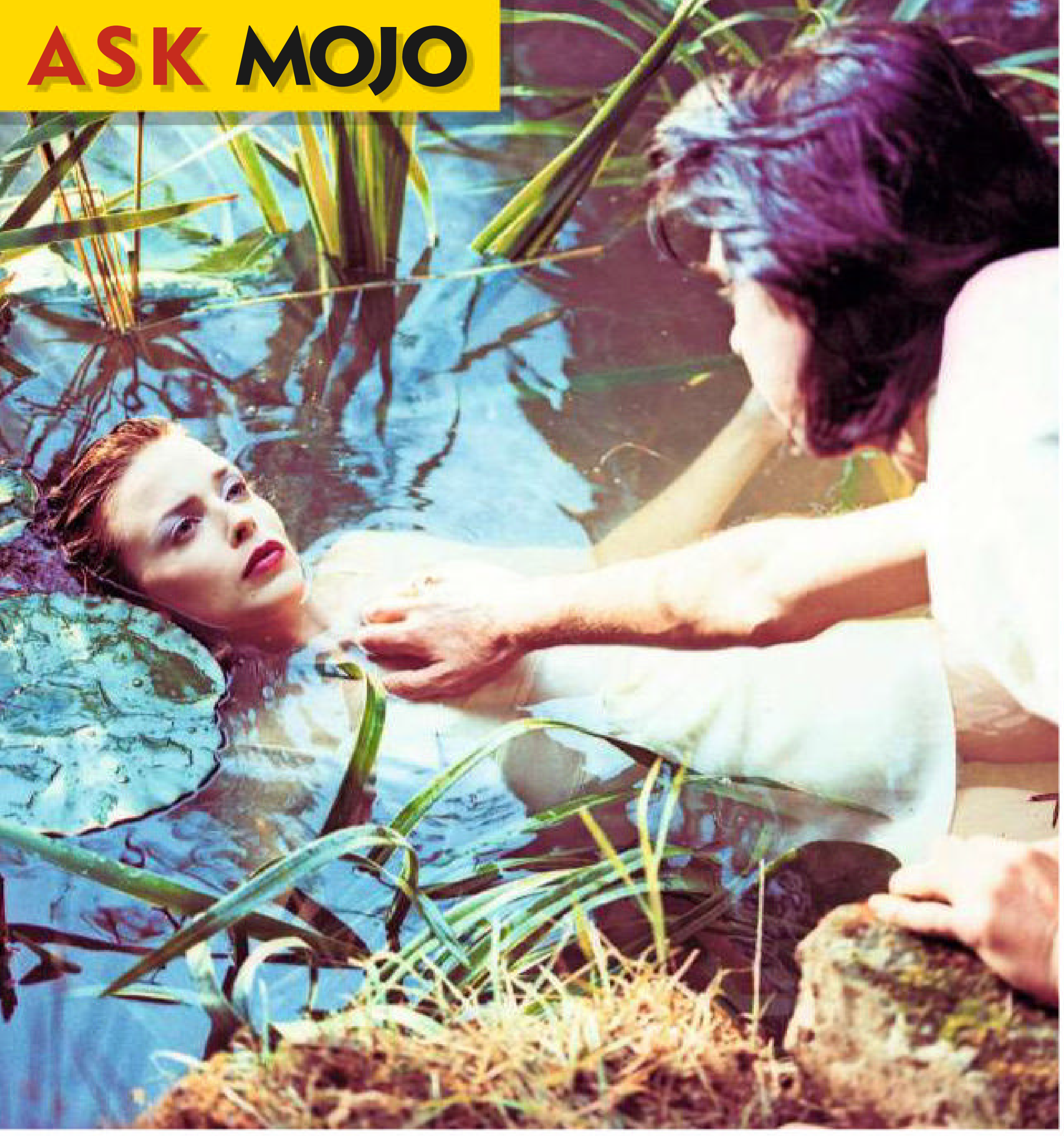


Two socksy: Cliff 'n' The Shads at Number 1.

AD ARCHIVE 1965


PASSION DEBASED BY LUST…
MUDHONEY
…LEAVES A TASTE OF EVIL!
…a film of ribaldry and violence made from the juice of life!
featuring "THAT GIRL" from LORNA
…Lorna Maitland!
TOO MUCH for One Town!!
A story never told so frankly …so intimately!
YOU WILL GO AWAY…whispering!

Thesp Lorna Maitland on the poster for Russ Meyer's cult movie of "ribaldry and violence". "I should not have made it," Meyer later reflected.



Badly Drawn Boy
The Hour of Bewilderbeast

It's great when you collaborate, yeah: (clockwise from left) Kylie and Nick Cave team up for 1995's Where The Wild Roses Grow; The Clash: did Peelie play a whole side of *Sandinista!*?; Doves' Bewilderbeastly behaviour; The The's Infected video.

Who crossed the 'cool' barrier?

Let us solve the niggling rock mysteries and half-remembered enigmas that plague your waking hours.

I was gobsmacked and not a little disturbed by the Charlie Drake/Genesis team-up single mentioned in Ask MOJO 339. Unfortunately, I have a problem with 'comedy' records. Can we have some good examples of so-called 'credible' talents working with unexpected collaborators in a more serious manner, like when Bowie produced Lulu?

Kevin Barton, via e-mail

MOJO says: "I was not cool and he was cool," was Lulu's verdict on her brief dalliance with Bowie. Debates about what constitutes "cool" apart, you could probably posit something similar about *Now Ain't The Time For Your Tears*, the 1993 LP Elvis Costello and Cait O'Riordan wrote for Wendy James from Transvision Vamp. Based on James's short tenure as an opinionated pop star, Costello later called it "a fumbled opportunity. But not my opportunity." There's also the time when Domino label electronic artiste Max Tundra wrote and produced Daphne & Celeste's 2018 LP *Save The World*, 18 years after the New Jersey duo's brief brush with pop fame, Ice-T's contributions to Mr. T's *Be Somebody (Or Be Somebody's Fool)* 1984 kids' LP, which included the viral Treat Your Mother Right, and Prince's '80s work with Bellshill's Sheena Easton. Nick Cave, Iggy Pop and Pet Shop Boys queuing up to record with Kylie Minogue also counts (Tame Impala's Kevin Parker, meanwhile, has claimed he's written an entire LP for her). Back on a comedians-with-serious-collaborators tip, meanwhile, thanks to Amsterdam reader Tonio van Vugt for reminding us that Brian May produced the 1987 LP by Young Ones alumni metal spoofers Bad News and played the solo on their version of Bohemian Rhapsody "with his guitar upside down". Of course, we remain interested in all your favourite unexpected studio collaborations, whether done with a straight face or strictly for the laughs.

DID PEEL PLAY A *SANDINISTA!* SIDE?

John Peel once played the Banshees' *The Scream* all the way through. Did he ever play a complete side of The Clash's *Sandinista!* and, if so, which one? Money/bet/friend etc etc.

Steve Richards, via e-mail

MOJO says: Though Peel is reputed to have been lukewarm about The Clash – his memoir Margrave Of The Marshes recalls an abandoned 1978 session by the band with barely-concealed irritation ("they were so out of their heads… not a very punk attitude") – he aired them regularly from '77 onwards, including numerous spins of tracks from 1980's triple-LP grand folly *Sandinista!*. We can't find any evidence he played an entire side of it, unfortunately, though he did play both sides of the band's second LP *Give 'Em Enough Rope* in full on two shows in October '78. Could this be the memory wagered upon?

WHERE'S THE INFECTED FILM?

I saw The Comeback Special concert film by The The and thought it was great. But why hasn't Matt Johnson made the wild 'video album', created for 1986's *Infected* LP, available again?

Pete Scott, via e-mail

MOJO says: Over to Matt, who says: "I want to do that. I have a very complicated relationship with [former label] Sony and I'm having very slow-motion dialogue. What I'd like to do is license it and release it through my own label, so I can do a very high-quality version. It had some really wonderful imagery. That was a hell of an experience doing that project. Let's hope we can get that out. I'd also like to license [1993 documentary] From Dusk 'Til Dawn and [1991 gig movie] Versus The World. Hopefully Sony will agree to that."

WHEN DID DOVES PLAY?

Were the three members of Doves simultaneously the backing band on any songs on Badly Drawn Boy's 2000 LP *The Hour Of Bewilderbeast*? They all have credits on the record.

Vince Docherty, via e-mail

MOJO says: We asked, and Doves said in a statement: "Yes, we all played together on Disillusion and Pissing In The Wind at the old Twisted Nerve studio in New Mount Street (Manchester). [Keyboardist and fourth Dove, Martin] Rebelski too." The Mercury Prize-winning LP also featured contributions from Twisted Nerve label boss Andy Votel and was marked by anniversary gigs in 2015.

ROCK'S GREATEST SIDE HUSTLES REVISITED

I read in Ask MOJO 333 about Stannah Stairlifts supposedly financing the Warp label, and Mark Knopfler writing a song about McDonald's burger magnate Ray Kroc. A few years ago, I was told one of Dire Straits once marketed a hangover cure. Is there any truth in this? And what are the other novel sidelines by musicians?

Graham Martin, via e-mail

MOJO says: You may be thinking of the band's former promoter Paul King, imprisoned in 2004 for a fraud involving hangover remedy Soba, made out of volcanic rock. King, who died in 2015, also worked with The Police and Tears For Fears. Please let us know your best examples of unusual rock enterprise – NB: no hot sauces or beers please!

CONTACT MOJO

Have you got a challenging musical question for the MOJO Brains Trust? E-mail **askmojo@bauermedia.co.uk** and we'll help untangle your trickiest puzzles.

Getty (2)

Love to lugs you, baby

Win! A pair of super-fine Meze Audio LIRIC headphones!

FROM HIGH-END Romanian audio brand Meze Audio come the brand new LIRIC headphones – designed for hi-fi sonic enjoyment on the go. The closed-back LIRIC headphones are ideal for music lovers who want the perfect union of home audio-calibre listening and easy portability. Featuring state-of-the-art planar magnetic technology scaled down for day-to-day use, the LIRIC brings the brand's signature high-build quality and immersive sound in a stylish modern headphone design. The sleek and modern finish is discreet, while the ergonomic design makes it super comfortable to play your favourite songs for hours on end.

These cans retail at a cool £1,799, and we have a pair up for grabs for this issue's crossword prize! So complete rock-clue lobe-teaser Michael Jones' crossword and send a scan of it to mojo@bauermedia.co.uk, making sure to type CROSSWORD 341 in the subject line. Entries without that subject line will not be considered. Please include your home address, e-mail and phone number. The closing date for entries is **April 2**. For the rules of the quiz, see www.mojo4music.com

See www.mezeaudio.eu for more info.

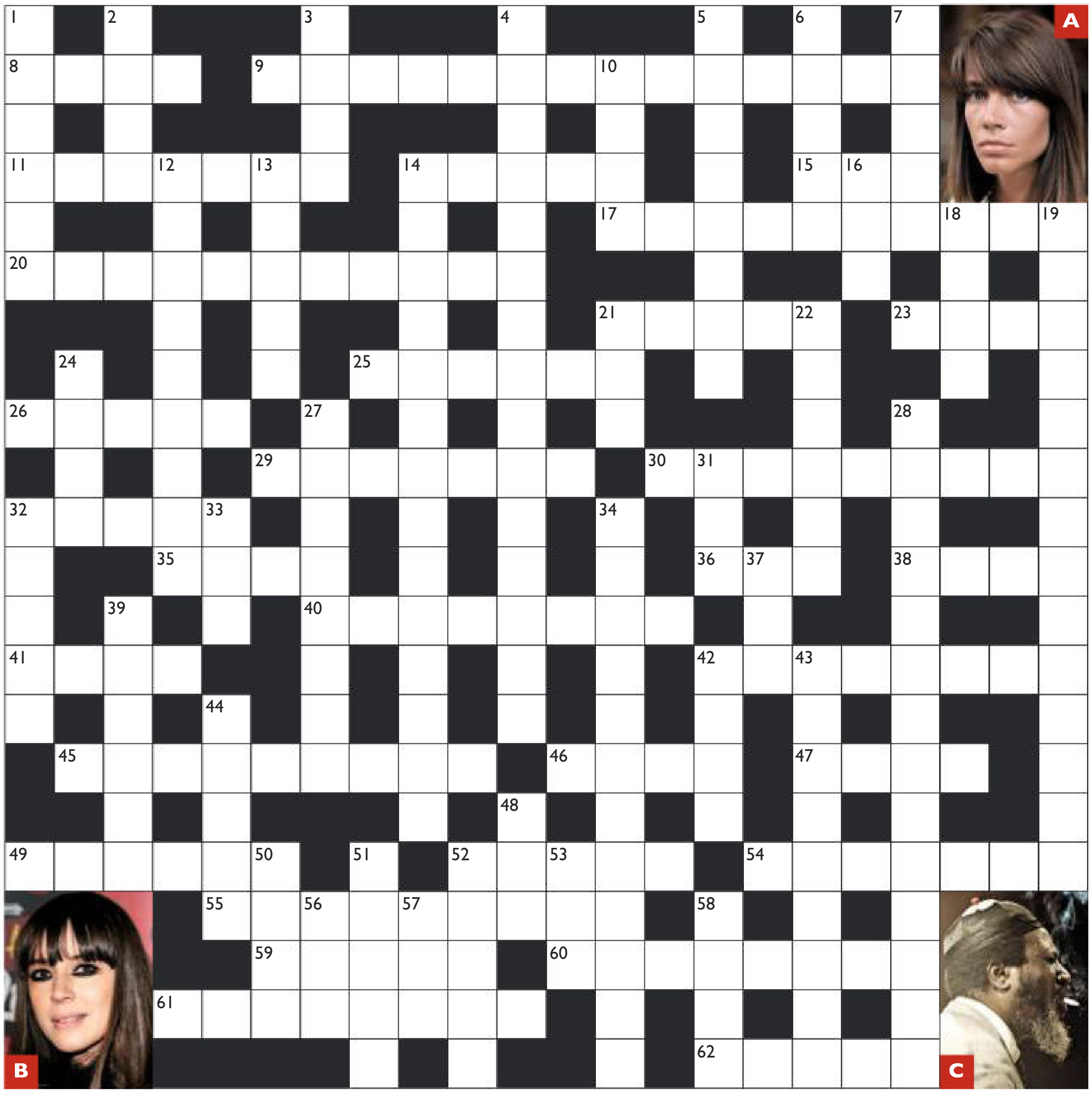
ANSWERS

MOJO 339

Across: 1 Grace Slick, 6 Fans, 10 Give Peace A Chance, 11 Evergreen, 15 Grant-Lee Phillips, 17 Rat, 19 Night, 21 Horace Andy, 23 Complication, 24 Lick, 25 Final, 26 UFO, 28 Crazy, 31 RCA, 33 Awe, 34 Perfect, 35 Kids, 37 Allen, 40 Delroy, 41 Atticus Ross, 44 ACR, 46 Home, 47 Boys, 49 Gatefold, 50 Moon, 51 Amos, 53 Owen, 54 Lola, 57 Swing, 58 GZA, 59 Dozy, 61 Shake The Disease, 62 Nina Simone, 63 Hi-hat.

Down: 2 River, 3 Copperhead Road, 4 Lycanthropy, 5 Claire, 7 Amnesiac, 8 Sheryl, 9 Cheap Trick, 10 Gary, 11 Earache, 12 Egg, 13 Nat, 14 I Say A Little Prayer, 16 Ian Anderson, 18 Tim Buckley, 20 Iris, 22 EMF, 24 Low, 27 Fair, 29 Zola, 30 Henry Mancini, 32 Psycho, 33 Ant, 36 DOA, 38 Ether, 39 Sundowner, 40 Dobro, 42 Ivor, 43 Shot, 45 Jail, 48 Sandman, 52 Sly, 55 Alarm, 56 Queen, 58 Giant, 60 Zwan, 61 SOS.

Winner: Stephen Hance of **London** wins a grab bag of Light In The Attic Records' LITA 20 box sets and albums.



Getty (3)

ACROSS

8 He hit big with *Dread In A Babylon* in 1975 (1-3)
9 See photoclue A (9,5)
11 Gillian from New Order (7)
14 ----- *Honey* (Radiohead album) (5)
15 How drummer and funk band founder Larry James described himself? (3)
17 Freeing lead single from Oasis' *Standing On The Shoulder Of Giants* (2,3,2,3)
20 "You got what you wanted" (PiL) (6,5)
21 Frank, who released *Hot Rats* (5)
23 Bloc Party's Okereke (4)
25 Identical numbers by Beirut, Destiny's Child and Yeah Yeah Yeahs (2,2,2)
26 Only studio album by psych rockers The Millennium (5)
29 First name of Chapman, Hurley or McGoldrick (7)
30 She made a fool out of the Electric Light Orchestra (4,5)
32 Their most recent release was *Flying Dream 1* (5)
35 First Eno-produced James album (4)
36 This could be Gordon or 24 Down (3)
38 Case, vocalist who is one of The New Pornographers (4)
40 Seventies supergroup formed by Stephen Stills (8)
41 US punk act who went *Beneath The Shadows* (1.1.1.1.)
42 Opening track on Springsteen's *Darkness On The Edge Of Town* (8)
45 Drummer who had his own Five during the British Invasion (4,5)
46 Friend of Slade (4)
47 It links Chic and a track on Pink Floyd's *More* (4)
49 A Björk song, or possibly Campbell (6)
52 Blur's civil servant Jacks (5)
54 City in which you might find Autumn, an Englishman, or Some Time (3,4)
55 Mark Knopfler's first film as a soundtrack composer (5,4)
59 Electronic and experimental festival held in Barcelona (5)
60 Can album before *Ege Bamyasi* (4,4)
61 See photoclue B (3,5)
62 Their debut was *Gyrate* (5)

DOWN

1 Anxiously obsessed with Paul Weller (4,2)
2 How to play it in West Side Story (4)
3 Music award given by the BPI (4)
4 Guitarist – he's with The Band (6,9)
5 Could be Michelle or Papa John (8)
6 *The -----* (Scott Walker album) (5)
7 In the original line-up, he was the bandmate of Allen, Ayers and Ratledge (5)
10 Bill Callahan's old band name (4)
12 Generation X singer (5,4)
13 Nelson, Wilson or Valance (5)
14 Saxophonist who's worked with John Coltrane and Sam Shepherd (7,7)
16 George Martin's Oxford Street studio (3)
18 Finished track by Portishead (4)
19 See photoclue C (10,4)
21 --- TV, U2 tour that followed the release of *Achtung Baby* (3)
22 Refuge founded by David Geffen (6)
24 Two quarters of The Breeders (4)
27 Pete Townshend's signature move (8)
28 He must die, according to Traffic (4,10)
31 Tom, whose albums include *We Have Sound* and *Luck* (3)
32 Black Sabbath's previous name (5)
33 "What is it good for?" (Temptations) (3)
34 Album by 45 Across's band (5,2,5)
37 Kaplan, co-founder of Yo La Tengo (3)
39 After Revenge, Peter Hook's side project (6)
42 Prefix used on most of Depeche Mode's Mute single catalogue numbers (4)
43 Genre of Jamaican music (9)
44 Gem of a track by T.Rex (5)
48 Midge, who first topped the charts as a member of Slik (3)
50 Failed to hold on to this Coldplay song (4)
51 2007 Ani DiFranco retrospective (5)
52 How many Little Birds? (5)
53 The --- Of Noise (3)
56 Album by Swans (3)
57 Theirs was The Prodigy's singles collection (3)
58 Jesca, whose first LP was *Kismet* (4)

Let's 'Werk together: KW (from left) Ralf Hütter, Klaus Röder, Wolfgang Flür and Florian Schneider, 1974: (below) the sleeve to 1986 single Der Telefon Anruf, with Rebecca Allen's computer portraits of the group; (left) Flür today.

Wolfgang Flür and Kraftwerk

It began with a Close Encounter: inertia and cycling brought his beat to an end.

HELLO SUMMER 1973

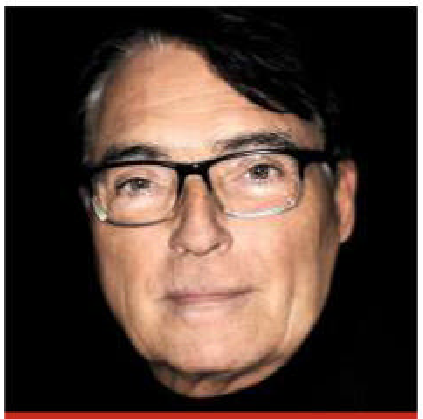
Long ago, before I met Ralf [Hütter] and Florian [Schneider], I had played in school and amateur bands such as The Beathovens, Fruit, Spirits Of Sound. With the Spirits Of Sound, my last amateur band, we had an exceptionally gifted guitar player – Michael Rother. We played at school parties and clubs. One club was in Mönchengladbach, called Budike. In this club Florian was watching my style playing drums. My style was simple, I played just what was needed, no more no less, minimal so to speak.

Michael was later invited to play for Kraftwerk and this broke my most beloved amateur band. I was pretty angry about the situation. The Kraftwerk brothers seemed to be in desperate search of good musicians. Drummers were their biggest problem, both explained later, because their former ones played too much rhythm, too complicated figures for their music themes. And – too loud!

Florian had talked to his partner Ralf and they at last invited me to a flashy bistro called Mata Hari for talks. We had some cold drinks and the duo tried to explain why they were looking for a new drummer, and that they'd seen me playing with the Spirits at the Budike and liked it very much. The pair were very different in style, very unusual in their choice of words and grammar. To be honest, I felt like they were from another star. I was curious and agreed to an invitation to their rehearsal room, which did not yet have the brand Kling Klang. It all happened in hot summer 1973. Here I had my absolute 'Hello' for electronic music, shortly before my twenty-sixth birthday.

In the bare room with factory walls, cold colourful neon light tubes – which lay on the floor, corners to each wall – were switched on first. It was a world of haunting beauty and it grabbed me immediately. Then Ralf and Florian showed me their instruments. Among them were a Moog and an Arp synthesizer. The two of them had only had this device for a short time, and they had fun demonstrating it to me at full volume. I had a 'Close Encounter Of The Third Kind', like hearing music from another planet. Never before had I heard anything like it, and it would change my life as a musician immensely. Long story short, they had me in their power and I couldn't help but agree to be a permanent member of their group – my first good decision.

Fotex/Shutterstock, Tom Steinseifer



"They had me in their power and I couldn't help but agree."
WOLFGANG FLÜR

GOODBYE 1987

This turned into 13 years, which were largely characterised by success and great trips to distant countries and cultures.

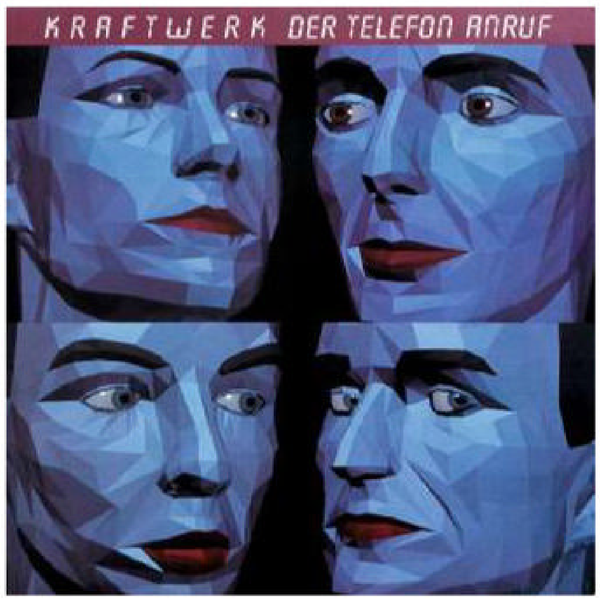
[But post-1981 album *Computer World*], we were no more recording music, until 1986 with *Electric Café*, which I found to be like 'cold coffee'. The founders had new interests. Bicycles were their new instruments. I became more and more frustrated about that situation, as did Karl [Bartos, percussion]. The last thing I did with them was films for Der Telefon Anruf [The Telephone Call, 1986 single]. The album, formerly called *Techno Pop*, was delayed immensely.

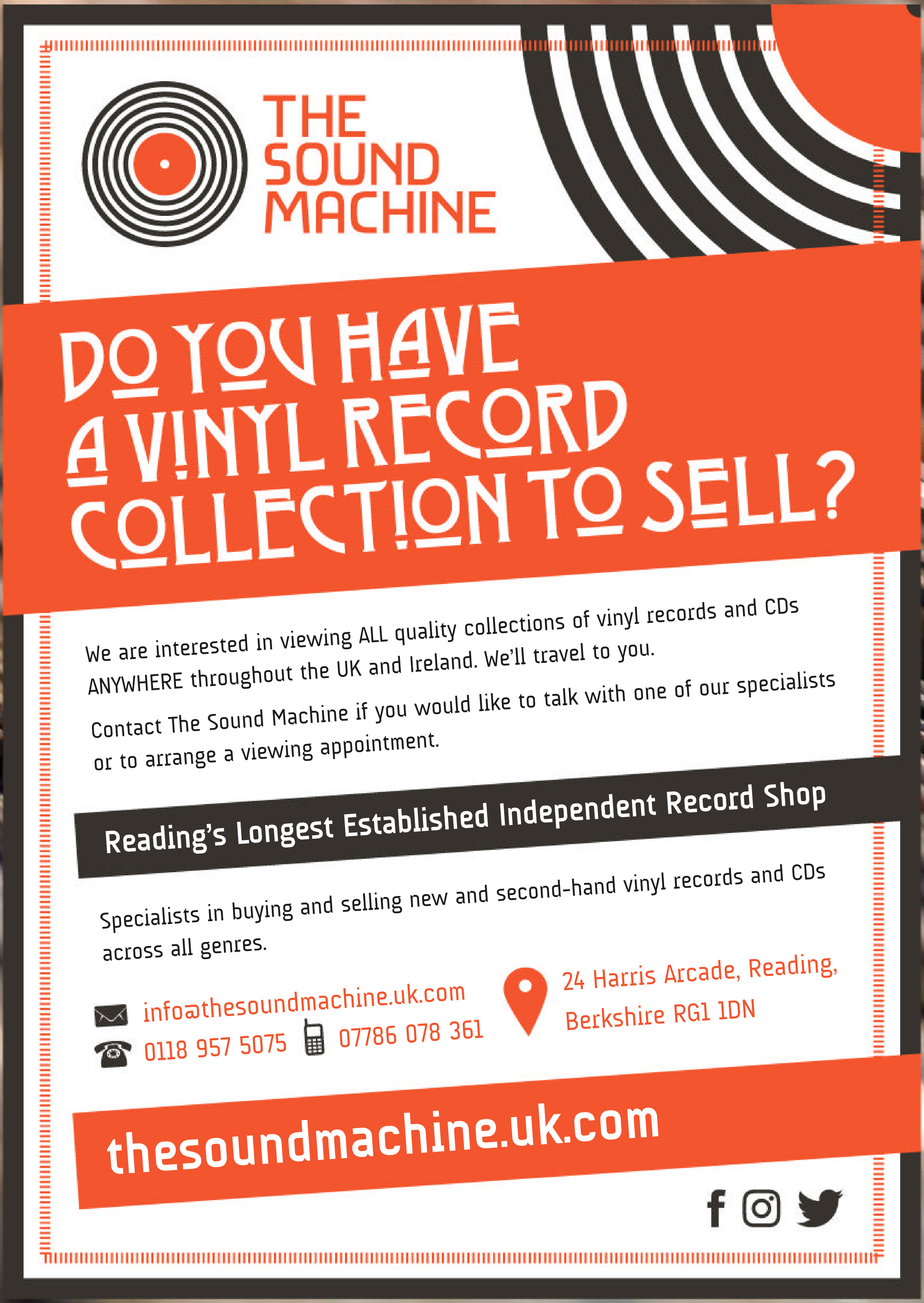
My interest in music-making with Kraftwerk was on a very low point and I went less and less into the studio, until no more. I did not resign as I never was their employee. Offers [to curate Kling Klang and be the "caretaker of the most famous sound laboratory in the world"] were abusive to me and led me to my Goodbye with the electric quartet. It was a rather sad situation because there was no longer any need for my haptic drumming.

No longer interested in friendly contact, the founders opted for sequenced, automated drum sounds and rigorously pursued their robotic style. For me, my decision to leave Kraftwerk after 13 years and pave my own musical path was the second good decision. Only this way could I invent my own songs and themes, as myself. I released my own albums – *Time Pie* (1997), *Eloquence* (2015) and now *Magazine 1*.

In 2016 I met Florian – better, he met me! – by chance in a Düsseldorf brewery restaurant where I celebrated a party with friends. Florian suddenly stood behind me and grabbed my shoulder. I stood up immediately, highly pleased to meet him. After 30 years we embraced each other the first time in our life. I thanked Flo for the wonderful years we had together. He answered: "These were the best Kraftwerk days, Wolfgang!" I'm grateful that the former flutist brought me into his band in 1973. Otherwise, I probably wouldn't have collided with modern music. The impact left its mark.

Magazine 1 is released by Cherry Red on March 4. Wolfgang plays UK live dates from March.





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